A South India Sanyasin in Kashmir

SWAMI RAGHAVANAND JI

Profound Homage by

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Introduction

Over the years, Kashmir attracted a number of adventurers. Some have been mere tourists, interested in seeking pleasure from the gorgeous scenic beauty of its glens and glades, its plateaus and meadows, its lakes, rivers and springs of fresh, invigorating water, its snow -clad mountains, its awe -inspiring forests and its gentle valleys. Some were seduced and enticed by the beauty of Kashmir so much as to grab and possess the land and establish their rule and stamp over it.

Among those who travelled from afar to visit Kashmir were also adventurers of a different kind, adventurers of spirit, those who came to seek not only spiritual peace and tranquility, but also answers to perennial questions of life and death. Some came to hone their spiritual experience and some chose to settle down and try and rejuvenate people's faith in the great values we inherit from our ancient Indian civilization. One of the illustrious names is of Adi Shankaracharaya who came all the way from the South of India to Kashmir in the 8^{th} century A.D. It is said that when he returned to the South he felt enriched with spiritual bliss. The great saint Swami Vivekananda also visited Kashmir and is reported to have had an illuminating spiritual experience at Khirbhawani. Some great souls were invited and encouraged to visit and stay. The Great King Lalitaditya who ruled Kashmir for 37 years (724 to 761 A.D.) persuaded learned scholars and intellectuals from Ujjain like Bhavabhuti and Vakpatiraja. He invited one great scholar Atrigupta to move to Kashmir. He was granted a residence on the bank of river Jhelum and was encouraged to pursue his search for higher knowledge. Atri

Gupta made Kashmir his home. His grandson, Acharaya Abhinav Gupta, attained a pre -eminent status in the galaxy of Shaiva philosophers and saints. He also distinguished himself in poetics, musicology and aesthetics. Hundreds of Buddhist and Hindu Savants were attracted to Kashmir at various times. Kashmir also has a proud heritage of Muslim Sufi saints many of who were revered as Rishis by Muslims and Hindus alike. Over the centuries many Hindus from various parts of India came for pilgrimages to Amarnath Yatra, Gangabal Yatra, Khir Bhavani, Hari Parvat, Shankaracharya temple and the Sun temple in Martand in Kashmir and also for the Vaishno Devi yatra in Jammu. Jammu was called the city of temples and attracted many Hindu pilgrims for centuries. Kashmir became a precious nursery of India's ancient culture.

In recent times, too, several saints came. One of them was Swami Raghavanand ji from the South; born on December 3, probably in 1896. He was a judge in South India and renounced his family as well as his position to take sanyas. It was said that acute family tragedy had triggered his sanyas from a respectable position as a judge.

He first arrived in Srinagar in 1931 after spending a year at Shirdi at the shrine of Shirdi Sai Baba. Most of the time, Swamiji stayed in Kashmir. He would move to Jammu or Delhi on temporary visits until the end of his life of 97 years in the year 1994. He had no permanent home and had short stays of a few days or weeks in temples or homes of many of his followers, whom he called friends.

During this long period of his stay, a large number of people, Hindus as well as Muslims, were attracted toward him. He never acknowledged anyone formally as a disciple but said that all

these people were his friends. They, however, derived solace and peace of mind in their presence with him. He generated in them in a silent, subtle manner, a spirit of devotion and of the eternal values of true faith.

As one of the many who felt drawn to Swamiji for his rare combination of spiritual prowess and his qualities of compassion and humanity, I make an endeavour to record some recollections of my long, continual association with him, which stretched for 46 years from 1948 to 1994.

This essay of reflections is my personal tribute and homage to that great soul. I am not qualified to fathom the depth of his spiritual prowess, but what I witnessed and felt was enough for me to realise that it was our rare good fortune to have known him and to have earned his caring attention. Many of them have recollections of their associations with him. I am including what some of them have recorded. Their notes have been very revealing; I am grateful to them.

I must say that Swamiji never liked self -publicity. He could be photographed only when he felt persuaded by our intense and affectionate pleadings. No wonder the preparation of this written tribute took a long time because I was a little hesitant if he would have liked the idea. This was possible only as a result of constant prompting by my children, Sidhartha, Malini and Anil, and more so by my grandchildren Vimarsh, Komal, Sonal, Dhiraj, Gautam and Priyanka. Their support and help has been most welcome. Komal and her husband Jamie spared lot of time to read the manuscript and make very helpful suggestions. I am grateful to all of them.

I am glad that the task of completing the book has been

achieved. It was possible with the forthcoming co-operation of several hands. I am happy that Anil and Manju maximised the opportunity of my visit and stay with them by working hard on this sacred job, while looking after me with caring and love. Anil spent long hours in typing and retyping the manuscript and introducing order in the narrative, with his meticulous skills. He showed adorable patience and deference despite my annoyingly frequent suggestions and sudden afterthoughts. We pray for Bhagwati's grace.

In reading this book I hope my children and grandchildren as well as other readers will find some answer to their question “What was the significance of Swamiji”? If they do, I will feel more than satisfied—Aum.

Swamiji did not establish a corps of disciples; he pointed the way by example and precept. We hoped to imbibe the qualities that would lead us to that path. Our faith, generated by him, became our guide. We seek his blessings and Bhagwati's grace!

Prem Nath Bakaya (IAS Retd)
February, 2013 (My 91st birthday)

Sharda Peeth

Pokhribal Temple

Chapter 1: Penance

1.1 His monthly pilgrimages to Shardaji Temple

My late wife Parma's aunt — her mother's sister — and her husband, Mr. S.K. Nehru, held Swamiji in great esteem and even awe. They had known him when Mr. Nehru was a Senior Forest Officer in Keran (Kashmir) before the partition of 1947. Swamiji would make a pilgrimage to the great Sharda temple near the Kishen -ganga river, walking all the very difficult way, on a pair of wooden or grass clogs from Srinagar a distance of about a 100 miles, mostly of rough journey through undulating thick forests over a jungle footpath beyond the town of Sopore. Rain or snow did not daunt him, neither cold nor rough weather, though he was very sparsely clothed. Sometimes the villagers, all Muslims, seeing him in the forest walking almost in a trance, would cover him with a woollen blanket — which he made no effort to hold — and which many a time would fall off on the way. He would go at a jogging speed, without any distraction, and on and on, until he reached the temple.

Over the total distance of 100 miles or so from Srinagar, he would break journey for a few hours during the night at 2 or 3 places only. One of these was the house of Mr. Nehru. He would have a meal, sometimes only cooked rice and water, sometimes cooked rice and milk, or cooked rice and curds water, without salt or sugar. Later, he started taking salt and cooked vegetables also. It was a time of intense and rigorous tapasya (penance) for him. People who knew about the spiritual power associated with the Sharda temple were amazed to see him visiting there on every full moon night. What overawed them — even the

Muslims who alone lived near the area — was that he was the only person known to them to be able to spend the night in the temple, all alone. Everyone else felt unequal to this daunting experience. The area was overrun and occupied by the Pakistanis during their raids of 1947 and is now beyond India's line of control. Aurel Stein in his notes to the Rajtarangini made detailed reference to the Sharda temple. Please refer to Note 1 on Sharda.

We used to ask Parma's aunt and her husband Mr. S.K. Nehru about Swamiji and they always told us of his great spiritual attainments and prowess. Those days, they said, he impressed and overawed them as a very austere, even forbidding saint who felt unmindful about his surroundings but was intensely absorbed mentally in the undistractable devotion to the Almighty, whom he worshipped in the form of Bhagwati, Shakti — the Embodiment of universal energy and kind motherhood. For Swamiji, this presence of Bhagwati was a living reality, all the time. Mr. Nehru was a deeply religious person, and his wife used to feel privileged to serve Swamiji whenever he offered them an opportunity. But they said that in those days he never used to talk much — or even come out of his constant, almost trance — like concentration on Bhagwati.

Parma believed that her cousin, Mr. S.K. Nehru's son, Mr. Brijendra Nehru, achieved great heights internationally in his professional career because as a young boy Swamiji had arranged to take him along and allowed him to stay alone with him inside the sacred temple of Sharda for one night.

1.2 My First Darshan of Swamiji in Srinagar

It was a rather black cloudy day in August 1949. I had a sense of anticipation. My wife Parma and I were expecting some great guest. We did not know who, but we had been asked to have a vegetarian meal prepared. Even my elder son Sidhartha (four years old), then called by the endearing name Bota, and my daughter Vijaya Malini called Tathi (one year old) felt something in the air. My cousin Sona's husband, Amarnathji, had told us he would try and persuade a great saint to visit us. Around noon, Amarnathji walked in along with a tall, handsome person in a saffron robe and dhoti, a South Indian by his complexion. There was a flutter. Parma and I seemed drawn to his magnetic presence and we greeted him with unusual respect. He preferred to sit near the window where some rays of the struggling sun were making bold attempts to enter as if to pay homage. Swamiji, as he was called, accepted a cup of tea with a little milk and sugar. Amarnathji asked him about my future and presented my right palm for him to see. He looked at it intently in the sunlight, which by now was brighter and said, "I want to verify: was he born on a Saturday, his age is 27 now? He has to struggle, but will progress. We consulted my uncle Nand Lai ji, who recalled and confirmed the day of my birth. So Swamiji went on to predict that I would do well and would be having a religious bent of mind. Parma and I were impressed. Swamiji advised that I should not show my palm or horoscope to anyone else.

I thought for a while that Amarnathji may have told him about my age, but how could he have known the day of my birth. There was no way Amarnathji would have known it. It was only my

uncle among those around in the house who recalled on what day of the week I was born.

During those days, my family was much weighed upon by a very gnawing worry. A close relative (my sister's husband M.K. Dhar) had left in panic about one year earlier and we did not know where he was; he had been scared by the prospect of a prosecution by the police into which his office boss had entangled him. So we asked Swamiji about him, “Is he alright? Where is he? Will he return?” Swamiji lit a cigarette, concentrated intently as one could see from his eyes, and said in a confident tone, “Yes, he is alive but scared, he moves from one place to another, is suffering from want. You will get a letter from him in 15 days. He will not reveal his address in that letter but in the next one, which will come four weeks from now.”

Two weeks later, Swamiji visited us again while we were having a cup of tea, and the postman came in to deliver a letter written by M.K. that had been posted from Bombay a week earlier. This was quite a miracle. Two weeks later, another letter came; this mentioned the address of a shop where he could collect his mail. I sent him an encouraging telegram of thanks and advised him to return. I also wrote a somewhat detailed letter that persuaded him to come back. Then the police case was tackled and he was on the road to rehabilitation as Swamiji had predicted.

Parma and I always felt attracted to Swamiji and were keen to meet him and just sit near him whenever possible. He used to live on the premises of Shivaalaya temple (also a Ramakrishna Ashram within the temple), which was not distant from our ancestral home in Kani Kadal, but he would not stay at one place

for long. Sometimes he would move into someone's house, on invitation and many people felt honoured if he agreed to visit them for a meal or to stay with them for a few days. He knew hundreds of Kashmiri Pandits by their first names, their ancestry, their particulars, and could surprise you with the details he could reel off as if reading from the palm of his hand. His memory for names, places, dates, events, persons and affairs was amazing, but one could always see — at least I could — that he remembered.

1.3 Penance around Hari Parvat:

We received word one day in the late fifties that Swamiji would be making a pradakhshina — circumalubulation around Hari Parvat; not walking, but a body -rolling penance along the circumference. So Parma, I and Sona, my cousin, and her husband, Amarnathji, as well as my son Anil went to witness the last phase. We reached the temple called Amarkaul's temple near the Pokhribal side. Swamiji had already started from a point much farther. Hundreds of Kashmiri Hindus used to go to Hari Parvat from Srinagar city, walking all the way from their homes, some starting at 5 a.m. and going around the hillock. Swamiji had started — perhaps on the same route (about 4 kilometers distance). But when we saw him, he was rolling on the ground keeping his body flat and his hands folded in a namaskar pose with hands pointed towards the Bhagwati's temple. The path was rough, strewn with little stones and pebbles — some of these with rather sharp edges. There were many who watched Swamiji during what seemed obviously to us a very painful

exercise. His body got some bruises and scars. Some of us wanted to put a shawl on him, but he motioned against any such thing. He would not allow people even to clear up the stones. This went on until he reached the Kathi Darwaza. We were walking along, thinking of him all the time. When he reached the end of the circumambulatory path, Swamiji got up on his feet and started walking away. From there he went to Rainawari, along with some people of that locality. We said pranaams and went home wondering and talking about this experience.

Chapter 2: Havans

2.1 The Pokhribal Havan in June -July 1947: *"Save the seven bridges"*

One of the learned and able Brahmins on Swamiji's panel told me the following story about one very important havan.

The year was 1947, the place Srinagar. The plan for the partition of the subcontinent of India had been announced. It had to be effective on August 15, 1947. In late June and early July 1947, Swamiji summoned his panel of Brahmins and requested that they prepare physically and emotionally for a havan that would last for a week or more. They had to live at the site of the havan, which was Pokhribal spring in the Hari Parvat area. They were asked to carry their clothes and personal effects. They noticed a great amount of anxiety and tension in his voice and also writ large on his face. His sentences were crisp and brief, like orders on a battlefield. All this and the faraway look in his eyes gripped them with a sense of awe and impending fear. He paid them the

dakshina (wage offering) in cash in advance, to provide for their families in their absence. They were poor people and he knew that they would need money for day -to -day expenses. They had nothing else to count on except their earnings from worship at various households on special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, weddings or Yajneopavit (holy thread) ceremonies. One Brahmin, Mr. Kashinath, told me that Swamiji seemed extraordinarily meticulous in his detailed planning and in collecting all the material he would need. He once again emphasized that the Brahmins should understand the gravity of the purpose and gear up their devotional fervour maximally to match the prayers in the hymns, and the refrain. The sacred fire was lit and the hymns and offerings started. The hymns, chanted in unison, and in the prescribed intonation and permitted rhythm, created a gripping atmosphere and aura all over the havan site. They started early morning after a bath and in freshly washed clothes, had a 15 -minute break for tea and a brief breakfast, then 45 minutes for lunch of fruit and milk or curds — no cereals, perhaps some fried potato chips or water nuts. The Purna Ahuti was held at sunset, and after that dinner was strictly vegetarian — rice and vegetables and lentils prepared by a professional cook and a helper who had been engaged. Swamiji looked after all with care and concern. Some family members of the Brahmins or others who knew of the havan also visited. A heavy sense of strict discipline permeated the atmosphere. Everyone was careful to ensure that no distraction or disturbance was caused in the havan or its continuous tempo and rhythm. The Brahmin said he felt some kind of vibration.

They noticed that Swamiji seemed to be intensely possessed and totally absorbed in the meanings of the recited hymns. The chant of the refrain, which sought special blessings of the Divine Mother against enemies and dangers, was characterised by a particularly intense devotional fervour and punch. This continued for ten days.

On the evening of the tenth day, the Brahmins started preparing to take leave, but Swamiji asked them to stay on. He said the havan had been proceeding well, but they would have to continue for ten more days at a similar tempo and at the same pitch of devotion and rectitude. The Brahmins could not refuse. There was such force in Swamiji's commands. So the havan continued for ten more days.

On the nineteenth evening, he addressed them again. There was anxiety in his voice, which frightened them somewhat, although they could not fathom what was weighing so very heavily on his mind. He seemed even to these familiar Brahmins a stranger, a man possessed by some driving obsession. The Brahmins were feeling tired and wanted a break. But Swamiji pleaded and made arrangements for a fresh set of clothes to be brought to each Brahmin and himself, sent some extra wages to their families, built up more stocks of provisions and persuaded them to stay on and continue for ten more days. On the twenty -ninth day, Swamiji addressed them again after the day's poorna ahuti and pleaded for an extension by ten more days. He sensed a great deal of restiveness built up among the Brahmins. So he addressed them thus: "Well, don't you want the seven bridges of Srinagar to be saved? We have to pray hard and seek Bhagwati's

intervention: otherwise we face total disaster."

The Brahmins felt stunned and scared. There was such force in Swamiji's words and they had so intense a faith in his spiritual prowess and his ability to look into the future that they submitted.

The havan continued for a total of forty days — the crescendo of faith and devotion rose to a new height in the last ten days. On the fortieth day, they felt that an expression of composure and elation had come over Swamiji. With a choked voice and with small tears of joy in his eyes he said: "Bhagwati is pleased; the city is saved and Mother will extend Her Divine Grace to save us all. Through a period of intense turmoil and distress, things will be transformed." The Brahmin told me "Nobody understood what Swamiji was referring to. But we felt assured as if a protective shield had been created to cover us all: not only us who were there, but the entire population — the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of Kashmir."

Then came October 22, 1947. News came that a large scale invasion by a force of Pakistani raiders, directed and equipped by Pakistan and armed with lethal firearms and their savage passions, had been set to attack from across the state border and were proceeding towards Srinagar. Events moved fast. Death and destruction struck en route and hordes of refugees rushed into Srinagar. Hundreds of innocent people were killed. To save their honour, many women jumped into wells or the river Jhelum while the ruler dithered, holding on to a scrap of paper: his standstill agreement with Pakistan, which was getting tattered with visible holes. At last he acceded to the newly -

created dominion of India, with the mass support of the Muslim population mobilised by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. The Maharaja asked the new dominion of India for protection and help. With his signing of the instrument of accession, the Government of India could send in its army, who in a long and fierce action demonstrating daredevilry and supreme examples of heroism, succeeded in driving the marauding invaders away from the outskirts of the city of Srinagar.

It was a time of turmoil, death, destruction and disaster, a grim situation of intense anxiety, but the seven -bridged city was saved by the protective fortification of Grace from the Divine Mother, as Swamiji had sought and ensured. The situation at that time, one recalls, was extremely grave, just a matter of touch and go. The State forces had evaporated or been driven into communal hostiles and the administration had collapsed. The volunteer rag -tag group of the National Conference under the charismatic leadership of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah endeavoured to maintain a fragile morale. All that they had was a passion to oppose being enslaved by the tribals, Punjabis and Pathans, led by Pakistani Officers who all loathed the Kashmiris. They had been provided the arms and the mobility and the organisation to fight. The intruders were raising the slogans of Islam to attempt to entice and mobilise the religious sentiments of the overwhelming Muslim majority. Pakistan also had a lobby in Kashmir, though small and without any powerful leadership, to match that of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. Reflecting on what we went through during those very agonising days when the invaders were literally knocking at the doors of Srinagar city,

the sound of guns and mortar fire could be heard from just three or four miles away. Hordes of refugees had streamed into the city to seek shelter, food and protection. They carried pathetic stories of tragic deaths on their way, most women having committed suicide.

In the face of this situation many households planned the mass suicide of women, looking for poisonous substances like arsenic or potassium cyanide. My wife Parma had gone to the house of her uncle, Lt. Colonel P.N. Kak of the Indian Army, who was the Station Commander of Srinagar. All female members in the household including Parma were given poison pills to be consumed in the event of capture. One recalls all this with a shudder.

In this atmosphere of desperation and helplessness, though slightly alleviated by the morale generated by the National Conference, it was only some kind of Divine Intervention that saved the city. The Indian Army faced a tough time, but gained the upper hand and we heaved a sigh of relief.

2.2 Our first experience of Swamiji's Havan at Hari Parvat:

One day we received word that Swamiji would be arranging a great havan, a religious function where incense and ghee and many other things are offered to Bhagwati in a sacred fire amidst recitations from an ancient Hindu scriptural text, Durga Saptashati. Some would perform a havan by reciting the sacred verses of the Vedas. Swamiji had chosen only one of the old sacred Sanskrit books from which he recited or asked the priests to recite. This was the Durga Saptashati, 700 verses on Bhagwati,

Durga, also called the Chandee paath. He had selected a group of learned Kashmiri Brahmins who knew the text and could recite in a devotional tune distinctly and correctly to his satisfaction. The Kashmiri accent and intonation is different from those of Hindus from other parts of India, particularly those of South India, but what Swamiji looked for in the Kashmiri Brahmins was the correct devotion and distinct phonetics of the text recitation. If at some stage any of them faltered into a mistake, Swamiji would correct him. The ritual had to be strict; if there was any variation, it was his deep faith that told him something could go wrong for the one who made the mistake repeatedly even after corrections by Swamiji.

The venue for the havan was Devi Aangan, at the foot of the Chakreshwar in the Hari Parvat area in Srinagar. The Chakreshwar was a popular landmark for the Shri Chakra. [Please see Note 2]. Parma and I, my cousin Sona and her husband Amarnathji went to attend. We were impressed by the orderly arrangements: five priests sitting on neat little mats, around the havan fire with platefuls of havan offerings like ghee, dry fruits, unrefined sugar, or jaggery and incense and flowers and a mix of barley and rice, neatly washed. The recitation started in a very clear loud chant, while everyone kept pace and read from the text, carefully and distinctly pronouncing every word. This produced a strangely edifying effect and created an aroma of spirituality all round. It kept everyone absorbed in concentration, experiencing what seemed to be vibrations produced by the chanting of the prayers. On completion, there was the Poorna - ahuti, the finale, the collective offering by all those present.

Swamiji led this with a plateful of the havan offerings, topped by a coconut, and offered it all into the fire, which by now was raging after all the ghee and other combustibles had gone to feed the fire. At that moment, Swamiji put his head in the fire. We were horrified, but he emerged after five or ten seconds with his forehead marked with burns and the sparse hair on his scalp burnt as well, but he did not show any signs of pain. He rose and began applying the havan tilak (vermilion mark) on the foreheads of all who queued up in line. This was a remarkable experience that stood etched in our memory. And, this used to be the finale of all such havans, on all occasions. He held havans at least four times every year at various places. More of this will be shared later in the story — particularly the great havan at Bhaderkali Temple in which my wife Parma and my cousin and her husband participated.

2.3 Community Havans

Swamiji had tremendous faith in the community havan. As far as we could understand, his purpose was to create an awareness of the spirituality that such rituals are meant to generate. Usually Hindus who can afford do arrange a havan once in awhile, mostly as a thanksgiving ceremony. Please refer Note 3. A chief priest is engaged to preside and coordinate and supervise. The chief priest has an assistant, and the head of the family and his wife participate. They must concentrate and sit through the ceremonies, which consist of chanting of hymns and prayers, aloud in rhythm. Different texts from ancient Hindu religious books are picked up for different contexts and situations, seeking and praying for various objectives.

For each yajnya (havan), Swamiji collected donations from whoever willingly gave, and insisted that the offer should not be made with the intention of seeking a return, or interest from an investment, but as a sacrifice. He would worship the Greatness of Bhagwati and offer prasaad sanctified by the Yajnya to as many people as could attend and participate. He insisted on collecting poor men and women, young and old, and also children for the havan prasaad. For the havan -yajnya that Swamiji organised, he always laid emphasis on the emotional involvement in the spirit of utmost devotion.

Swamiji used to decide upon the day and timing and venue for the havan, and then inform those who came to see him and everyone would contribute according to what he or she could afford. It was always a large participatory event. Sometimes it would be on a large scale. Swamiji, it seems, got a feeling what kind of havan and on what scale it should be arranged at what time. He had a panel of Brahmin priests whom he trusted for their learning, their devotion and their honest and accurate recitation. He was very particular on these qualities. One could notice the remarkable spiritual quality of the havan arranged under Swamiji's guidance and his meticulous supervision and attention to detail. In my experience, such havans were always of a higher order than the ordinary rituals arranged privately in families. Swamiji's havans had the qualities of common participation, a devotional fervour and a power to generate concentration and communion. One felt that Swamiji had the power to seek and summon the devotion and spiritual environment that permeated every such occasion and bathed

the keenly participating devotees in a blissful aura. People believed that it was a totality of effect of the inherent power of the chants, the vibrations, the recitation produced and the overall envelope of intense devotion that Swamiji's presence invoked and sustained throughout the ceremony. For Swamiji, the Divine Mother was a constant, living presence, radiating Bliss and Grace, and he seemed to attune himself to that reality. He tried to radiate and infuse the same kind of emotion in the havan participants. The poorna ahuti, the completion of the havan, was the grand finale of each yajnya. All those present would stand up and, led by him in his sonorous devotional voice, chant chosen verses and deliver their offering of Havan Samagri into the fire. After that, people would partake of the havan prasaad, usually a large vegetarian meal consisting of a carefully and cleanly prepared delicious meal. Normally no less than 200 or 300 people partook of the meal. I could see that, for Swamiji, the run -up to the actual date fixed for the havan was always a hectic period of spiritual activity — this was the priority task — not only the mundane details of collecting the subscription, the provisions, the manpower and other important logistical tasks, but the whipping up of the devotional fervour and the single - minded effort it involved.

2.4 Vaishno Devi Havan

Swamiji once said he wanted to arrange a havan at Vaishno Devi. He travelled to Katra, the base station for the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage, and took with him my home helper, Roshan Lal, and his family, two people from Jammu and one who used to get a

big bagful of fresh vegetables from his own farm in a village adjacent to Jammu. I was told that while Swamiji could not go up to the temple, he stayed in Katra but sent his party up to the location of Vaishno Devi, where the havan was performed on his behalf.

2.5 Welcoming sadhus returning from Amar Nath pilgrimage

On another occasion, Swamiji wanted to give some help to the many sadhus who come to Kashmir for the Amar Nath pilgrimage. He went and stayed at Pahalgam and met the pilgrims on the day of their return from the holy Amar Nath cave. Swamiji provided them food and some warm clothing.

2.6 Havan at my home

While Swamiji performed a very large number of havans (yajnas) — perhaps five or six every year — the memories of some that I attended stand out. One was organised at my home at 26 A/D Gandhi Nagar in Jammu. About 150 to 200 people came. Swamiji had called in a Shastriji from Jammu whom he trusted to recite with accuracy and devotion.

The aura of Swamiji's spiritual prowess seemed to radiate all over, it transformed and elevated the environment of our drab residence. The peace and the flavour of sanctity lingered for a long time. Parma and I and our relatives and friends felt elated, particularly those of us like Parma's brother, Colonel Raina, and his wife (Mrs Sona Batni Raina) and the two of us who participated in the havan recitations. It is almost impossible to describe the feeling, but I recollect that neither Parma nor I had any particular desires or objectives in mind, and that that made

the experience more satisfying.

There was another havan that Swamiji performed in Ahmedabad in my elder son Sidhartha's house. Many of his friends and acquaintances participated in that havan.

2.7 Amar Bhavan Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi

Another one was a havan on a large scale in Delhi at Kashmiri Pandit's hall at Amar Bhavan, Lajpat Nagar. A large amount of preparation preceded it. Mr. Sham Lai Wattal, advocate, and his son Ramji, also an advocate, Mr. Prem Nath Sadhu, a Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Colonel J.N. Raina and his sons and many others combined to have the things collected and made all the elaborate arrangements. About a thousand people attended — of these a total of about 800 sat down for the vegetarian lunch after the completion of that havan. We had to feed them in four groups, one after the other.

Apart from the hustle and bustle and the scale of the service of meals, what was remarkable about this particular havan was the strange aura of blissful peace that radiated from the site of the havan while the hymns were being chanted. There was an unusual charm and power in his recitation, which brought out aloud and very distinctly the intonation of every word of every stanza and made us conscious of the power that the hymns and prayers have. Swamiji was in a trance when the havan was completed and tears trickled down his face almost all throughout. At the Purna Ahuti, while doing his pranaams he thrust his forehead into the fire. Everyone was horrified, but we knew he often did this, and then he emerged after a few

seconds.

He supervised personally the distribution of the prasaad, and even distributed the large quantities of apples and dried fruits and sweets that people had brought to offer him. Many had been notified of the celebration of the havan and the response, despite the long distances, was very good.

2.8 Frequent Havans at Tullamul - Khirbhavani

There were numerous occasions of havan performances at Khirbhavani — Tulamul, which was for Swamiji a very favoured place. This required a large logistic effort, too, but from the point of view of spiritual effect the environment appeared much more conducive and potent. Many devotees and participants used the occasion to stay for a couple of nights. He would also usually stay overnight to prepare for the havan before it was performed. Whatever money or materials were saved in a havan would invariably be rolled over for the next havan, usually in the same place soon thereafter.

2.9 Other locations of havans

Swamiji used to select temples in Kashmir or Jammu as an appropriate venue for a havan. Locations in which I participated included Shivalaya, Kanikadal, Srinagar and a temple in Rainawari, Srinagar.

On one occasion, Swamiji organised a large scale and very well-attended havan on the grounds of Raghu Nath Mandir Jammu where a sadhu called Maunee (silent) Baba had set up his camp.

2.10 Birthday Havans (December 3)

Swamiji used to move to Jammu during winter months, and sometimes to Delhi also for a brief period, although he would not stick to one place or get particularly tied up or attached to any family or home. Most of the time, he used to move out of Srinagar in November and stay in Jammu, where on December 3rd every year he would arrange a havan on his birthday. This was usually held at the Rehari temple in Jammu and often about 500 people or more would partake of the prasad.

2.11 Mantras in havans

Kashmiri Brahmin pujaris were familiar with Durga Sapta Shatee (which they used to call the Chandi paath). However, they were in great awe of the Chandi paath and had never ventured to take the risk of chanting it in havans, lest there should be a mistake. Swamiji built up their confidence and trained them in chanting the Durga Sapta Shatee correctly, accompanied by intense devotion. Please refer Note 4.

More frequently for his havan, Swamiji used Durga Saptashati, which (particularly chapters four and eleven) he called "a treasure cash of spiritual beneficence". Swamiji would choose the Durga Saptashati for recitation at the yajnya and offerings were made at the end of recitation of each sloka stanza. Sometimes a key sloka was selected as a refrain (Samput) and repeated after every sloka. Sometimes Swamiji would also include the Bhagwati hymns that were popular and commonly

recited by Kashmir Pandits, such as the Bhavaani Nama Sahastra. The Indrakshi Strotam was also chanted at times. [see Note 4.2]

The timing that Swamiji chose for his havans always had significance and a general or specific purpose. For the specific prayer to deal with a specific kind of situation or event, he picked up a stanza to serve as the refrain, which had to be repeated after every stanza in the main hymn.

There was another havan in Delhi that also stands out in my memory. Ten well practiced gentlemen (including me) were selected for the satisfactory recitation of the widely known hymn, Bhawani Sahastranaam. One thousand names of the divine Mother, the ultimate reality of multifarious attributes, had to be recited once by each of us. Please refer Note 4.3 on Bhavani Sahastranaam.

Again, the hymn of Indrakhshi Stotra had to be recited 100 times by each, and the entire Durga Sapta Shatee (700 stanzas), the Chandipaath, once by each of us. This made a total of 10,000 + 1,000 + 7,000. It meant a great deal of effort and took a total of 15 hours. We sat through the night with only brief breaks. The experience saturated the participants in a blissful peace of mind, depending on the amount of devotion each one was able to muster in the recitation.

2.12 Swamiji's short -term stays

Swamiji stayed in a number of temples in Kashmir, Jammu and Delhi. The ones which come to mind are the Shivalaya temple, [Ramakrishna Ashram] in Kani Kadal, Srinagar, Rainawari temple,

Srinagar, Tulla Mulla, Kashmir, a temple near Old Bridge, Amira Kadal, Srinagar, Rehari temple, Jammu and a temple in old Delhi. In Srinagar Swamiji often stayed with the Bhandari family of Rainawari, Mr Labru's family at Karan Nagar, Lalaji, Mr Abrol and his son in Karan Nagar, Dr Bal Badar Dhar, Shivpura, Batwara. In Jammu he stayed at our house in Gandhinagar, Mr Moti Lal Kaul's (and his wife Dulariji's) house in Canal area, Mr Ram Prakash's (IGP) house in Gandhi Nagar, Mr Bhandari's family in Purani Mandi, Jammu, Mr T N Tiku and his family in Bhagwati Nagar, Mr Gandotra, Shakti Nagar. In Delhi he stayed at Mr Shyam Lal Wattal's and Mr Ram Wattal's house in Malaviya Nagar and later in Pamposh Enclave, Mr Shiban Bhan's house in Greater Kailash II. In the late eighties and early nineties he stayed with Mr Prithvi Nath Wattal in a farmhouse in Ambedkarnagar, Delhi.

2.13 Frequent attendees at havans

Most of the families with whom Swamiji stayed for short periods attended the havans organised by him.

There were some families which participated enthusiastically in most of Swamiji's havans. These included the late Mr Som Nath Bhan, his wife Mrs Amma ji Bhan who had picked up the contact with Swamiji from me and my late wife, Parma. Swamiji visited them often and their sons and daughters -in -law. [Mr Bhushan Lal Bhan and Lalitaji; Mr Chamanji Bhan and Chandraji; Mr Shibanji Bhan and Pratibhaji; Mr Maharaj Bhan and Girijaji]. Chandraji had become an expert in making uppama which was a favourite dish for Swamiji at breakfast time. Other frequent participants included Colonel Raina his late wife Mrs Sona Batni

Raina, their children Mrs Nirmal Kaul and Mr MK Kaul, Mr Vijay Raina, Mr Sanjaya and Mrs Anita Raina; Mr P N Dhar and Mrs Rupa Dhar, and their children Mr Anil Dhar and Mrs Reeta Dhar, Mrs Anita Sazawal and Mr Virendra Sazawal, Mr Atul Dhar and Mrs Renuka Dhar;

Dr Hira Lal Razdan and Mrs Kanta Razdan their children Rajender and Seema Bhargava; Mr and Mrs Vinod Mahotra, Mr Bitu Bakshi and his family (Jammu), Mr Balji Krandoo, Rainawari, Mr Dina Nath Ganju, Mr Makhan Lal Ganju, my sister, Vijay Lakshmi (Benji) and her family, Lalita and Chaman Lal Kaul and Mr Ramji of Rainawari.

There were some helpers who worked for preparations. These included Poorna Nandji, Mr Roshan Lal Dhar and his family, Mr Banarsi Das and his family at the Rehari temple and many others.

Chapter 3: Insight and foresight

3.1 Humility

All those who came into contact with Swamiji developed a deep faith in his powers of predicting the future and giving timely and insightful advice. One fact that Swamiji always emphasised was that he never claimed to have any powers himself. He would say that he would pray to Bhagwati on their behalf. It seemed to him that there is some force that moved things on a determined course and all he did was to be in touch with the Bhagwati all the time so he got visions of the future. About marriage he would say that there was "karma lekha" or written destiny. About other events he would say there is time for everything. It was obvious that he had acquired the power to share the vision of the divine authority in the form of divine mother whose intense and close devotee he was.

3.2 Mind Reading

I would like to relate another experience. My uncle, Dr. Kashinath Bakaya, had just retired as the head of the Department of English Literature at Rajasthan University and moved into a rented house at Rajbagh, Srinagar. My wife and I lived at Tulsibagh about 4 kilometers away. We used to go often to meet him and spend some time with his family, which used to be part of the Bakaya joint family in our ancestral home at Kani Kadal. And Dr. Kashinath, fondly known as Lallaji, was an intensely loved uncle and a special favourite of ours. He was a

great soul, always full of affection and sincere help to me when I was growing up. His son, Mr Vijay Bakaya, a brilliant IAS officer, retired as Chief Secretary in the J&K Government.

One day, Dr Kashi Nath Bakaya and his wife Shyama Bhabhi invited Parma and me to his home in Rajbagh to meet two of his valued friends from Rajasthan who were expected to join him for dinner. They were expected at 7.30 p.m. and he thought they would leave around 9.30 p.m., so it should be easy for us to go back home the same evening. We went at about 6 p.m. and started chatting about old times and our life at Kani Kadal.

The guests kept us waiting, finally arriving at 10.30 p.m. Before the host could ask what had caused the delay, they apologised profusely and related the reason. They said for them an invitation from the Kashmir University for a four-day visit was welcome and they wanted to use the opportunity of the leisure time to try and meet some saints, for which Srinagar was well known. They said they met Swami Lakhsham joo, the great saint and scholar of Kashmir Shaivism. Then someone suggested they should also visit one Swamiji, who was, at that time, staying with Professor Labru of the Teachers' College at Narsingadh, Srinagar.

They said they went to see him at 6 p.m. and while going up the stairs to his room on the first floor of Professor Labru's small house, they sensed a strange aura emanating from the room. This, they said, overwhelmed them and all they could do was to bow with pranaams when they were face to face with Swamiji, who they felt was looking bright and resplendent sitting in the padmasana Yogic posture. They said they were attracted by a spiritual halo, which gripped their attention. They thought they

would ask him some questions about his spiritual practice — Saadhana or some advice — or some clarifications about the ultimate reality. They said that even before they could summon the courage to articulate the question, Swamiji pulled out a book from a closet nearby and, turning the pages, asked them to read and reflect on some particular passage that he pointed out. They said this was repeated with different books pulled out by Swamiji until all the questions that were in their minds and not spoken to him were answered. Both were scholars and were familiar with most of the Sanskrit scriptures that these books mentioned and explained, but just the manner in which these were presented to them in reply to the unspoken doubts and questions they had in their mind, kindled a new meaning in the passages, of which they had not thought of earlier. This was the individual and independent experience of both of them. One was the Vice Chancellor of Rajasthan University and the other one was the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, both reputed for their erudition. They said this went on until 9 p.m. and they felt glued to their seats. At 9 p.m., the host asked Swamiji what time he would like to have dinner. Swamiji asked the two guests to have something to eat, too, and they agreed to have some tea and sweets. They said they asked for an appointment the next day and he suggested meeting him at 7 a.m., to which they agreed. They could not take leave until 10 p.m., when they were awakened, as if from a trance. Such was the spell they felt Swamiji had cast upon them by his spiritual prowess. Both were knowledgeable and conversant with spiritual truths. Swamiji's communion with them was on a plane different from the one

with us, mere ordinary people.

3.3 We Dream for a house

At Kani Kadal in Srinagar, we were part of a large joint family, all huddled up.

Parma and our children increasingly felt cramped in the space. Besides providing a good education for our children, our wish for a house of our own took shape in the early 1960's and she once confided this to Swamiji. He lit a cigarette and seemed to concentrate on an incisive look at the future. After awhile, with a faraway look, he said, “Oh yes, you will certainly have a house of your own and the children will be provided with a very good education and training so they have a good start for a prosperous life.”

Meanwhile, the State Government launched a housing scheme in Srinagar and also in Jammu. Among many others, I was allocated a plot of land in Jammu. I made a plan in consultation with an architect friend. Swamiji had a look at the plan and guided me, encouraging me to construct a three-bedroom house with a family room, sitting room/ dining hall, and two bathrooms, a kitchen and a verandah. The cost was beyond me and I said I could only afford one bedroom and one bathroom with a living room, dining room and kitchen and to leave the idea of additional bedrooms and bathrooms for the future. Swamiji said, “Start constructing and we will pray and see what Bhagwati desires.”

I moved to Jammu on the annual move of Government offices and Swamiji also shifted to Jammu. I had no idea how or from

where I could get the funds. 1964 was a year of turmoil and drastic change in Kashmir. A new Government was formed and I had a better office environment. Those in authority used to consult me and trust me. I recollected that a few years earlier, I had put in a claim for a pay concession that had been upheld by the finance department and also by my minister. The then - Premier had marked it for “Cabinet” and passed it on to his Chief Secretary. When the entire setup changed, it was discovered that there were about a few hundred files locked up and not at all put up on the agenda of the Cabinet. The new Chief Secretary ordered the cupboard to be unlocked and the cases came out, tumbling like forlorn skeletons. Among these were many that affected hundreds of government servants, who it seemed had run out of the then Chief Secretary’s favour. In many instances, it was said that the Premier himself had second thoughts but marked them “CS”. The new CM, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq, told me that for such cases, “CS” meant “Cold Storage.” Anyway, these cases were put up as a special agenda for the Cabinet. My claim was also listed and approved. This decision gave me what was then a sizeable sum of Rs. 5,000, which seemed a Godsend. I informed Swamiji and he said, "everything has its time". Additionally, I had applied for a housing loan, which was also approved and released promptly. I was able to have the ground floor constructed without delay. When we moved into the house, Swamiji was kind enough to spend some days with us. After awhile, he said that he was thinking that I should construct a suite of rooms as an apartment on the first floor so I could collect some rent to help repay the housing loan. He encouraged

me to do this. Luckily, I obtained additional loans that made it possible. The entire construction was effectively and completely organised and supervised by Parma.

3.4 Foresight into the future

Prithvinath (P.N.) Shair, an advocate, was a friend of mine whom I used to meet occasionally. On one of my visits to his house one day, P.N. told me he had had a dream the previous night. He had dreamt that he was asleep in what seemed to be an elongated bedroom in his home The door was open and a tall resplendent figure, clad in a long saffron shirt and dhoti, walked in. P.N. said he was overwhelmed by the grace and force of the sadhu's presence, and he left his bed and knelt before him. When he stood up, he found himself awake and in the pose of a bowing down namaskar. While we were thus talking, a common friend, T.N. Dullu, also an advocate, walked in along with a sadhu whom P.N. recognized Swamiji as exactly the one he saw in his dream that previous night. He told T.N. and me that he had never seen him before. P.N. and his wife got up and led Swamiji to a seat at a respected place in the sitting room. They asked him if he would care for a cup of tea. Swamiji agreed and all of us had tea. P.N. and his wife invited Swamiji to have his lunch with them and Swamiji said, "Not today as you are planning to cook a non - vegetarian meal, as always. So I'll come back some other day." They fixed a date for a vegetarian lunch the following Sunday, to which T.N. and I were also invited. When I arrived, I saw Swamiji already at P.N.'s home, with a sad expression on his face and a horoscope (a description of the configuration of stars ruling the

birth and life of the person calculated by an astrologer) unwound on his lap. It was P.N.'s horoscope and the only words Swamiji uttered were "Sarva naash" (all destruction). When P.N. and his wife, who had heard it or caught the import of this, asked him to explain, he waved to them to console them without repeating the words. But P.N. started asking me questions. I kept quiet, but he kept asking worriedly. T.N. arrived and P.N. asked him what it meant. He didn't know what had happened, so we kept quiet. Swamiji looked sad, but was quiet as well. Swamiji asked P.N.'s wife to get the lovely meal she had prepared. While Swamiji was eating, he was quiet and contemplative. To me, he looked tense and was occasionally casting glances on P.N. After that, Swamiji used to visit P.N. and his wife often, almost every third day.

On one such occasion, he saw P.N. lying in bed in great pain. He asked him to consult a doctor immediately. There was a private hospital next door and the doctor who ran it was a friend of P.N. He was called over and he diagnosed the ailment as an intestinal obstruction. He advised surgery, but before that he prescribed some medication. The pain subsided and the spasms passed. After a few days, P.N. had the same symptoms, but by then he had been prepared for the surgery. He was admitted to the National Hospital. Swamiji appeared, pacing up and down, outside the room and in the open lawn.

After the surgery, the doctor came out to say that the operation was successful. P.N. was discharged from the hospital after two weeks and while he was convalescing, Swamiji would visit him almost every second or third day. He continued to feel concerned about P.N. Whenever I asked him, he just kept quiet.

He never gave a positive answer, but when P.N.'s wife asked him, he consoled her by saying, "May Bhagwati bestow Her Grace!" P.N. continued to be in normal health, but after a year or so, he felt out of sorts. The doctor told him he would be alright, but Swamiji was again very pensive whenever he went to P.N.'s home.

Meanwhile, my wife and sister were one day visiting our Brahmin astrologer Pandit Srikanth Wangnoo when P.N. and his wife also arrived to consult him.. Pandit Srikanth opened P.N.'s horoscope, but after just a quick glance wound it up and returned it to P.N., telling him he would like to see and study the horoscope at leisure after a month. P.N. felt disappointed and when he left, my wife asked Srikanthji why he was so curt with P.N. who was a friend of mine. Then Srikanthji told my wife and the others in the room that a quick glance at P.N.'s horoscope had convinced him that P.N. was in the last days of his life and he would not live beyond a month. When Parma related to me what the astrologer had said, I was reminded that Swamiji had said "Sarvanash" when he first saw P.N.'s horoscope more than a year earlier. A chill ran through me. From that day on, I used to look up P.N. more often. Swamiji also used to go to see him and spend some time with him, his wife and children and talk about their future. Before the month was out, P.N. fell ill again and had to be moved to the hospital where his ailment took a very critical turn. He passed away in the hospital. I used to wonder if anything could have been done by Swamiji to avert the Sarvanash — the disaster that struck P.N. One day, Swamiji seemed to sense what was troubling my mind and he said,

“Nobody can avert death, which comes at a fixed hour and at a fixed place — this is a relentless law of nature. All one can do is to encourage good deeds and extend a small protection as one uses an umbrella to try and provide shelter against a vicious downpour of rain in a storm."

3.5 Planning for future sad days

For anyone who came to him with his woes, he would apply the incisive flashlight of his intellectual and extrasensory powers and delve deep into the future and offer very shrewd and sane advice — informed not only by his remarkable analytical competence and his great sense of judgment, but also by what seemed to be his third eye. But during the period of preparation for a havan, his powers seemed so preoccupied that he would politely say, “Meet me and ask your questions after the havan.”

I recall that one day in December 1976, Swamiji woke up at 5 a.m. in our house at Jammu, where he was staying. He called for Parma and me. I rushed to his room and he asked me to get Parma and sit down. Parma came and he asked us to listen carefully, telling her “Bhabhi, you should finish off your domestic responsibilities quickly. You have already married off your elder son and your daughter, but the younger son remains unsettled. I urge that this part of your life’s responsibility outstanding at present should be fulfilled – Soon!” The time and the setting he chose to deliver this advice to Parma and me, although in a very affectionate grandfatherly manner but with a firm tone of inevitability, startled me. I was really scared, but I didn’t show it outwardly. I wanted to ensure that Parma did not panic. After a

cup of tea, Swamiji went back to sleep and we also went away to try to sleep.

One day at about 11 in the forenoon, someone rang up Parma from Srinagar to say that Swamiji had suddenly wanted to visit Jammu, but couldn't get a plane ticket as the weather was uncertain and his familiar taxi driver was not available, so he had boarded one of the most comfortable buses and should be in Jammu by 4 p.m. His travel by bus from Srinagar to Jammu was something very unusual. We were anxious and Parma and I and a Begum friend of hers went to look for him at the bus terminal in Jammu. As soon as he arrived, he asked me to go and meet the Minister at the appointed time. It was surprising how he knew that I had such a meeting scheduled. He said he would go to our home with Parma and her friend. After my meeting with the Minister, I went home and he asked me how it went. He told me that he was sensing some bad times ahead and that I should proceed with circumspection.

A period of anxiety and difficulties unfolded itself, leaving me in wonder and agony. Swamiji dropped hints of trouble, but assured me that even if this travail was prolonged, no harm would come to me and ultimately I would emerge unscathed. The dark clouds gathered and the storm continued, but cleared up after years of tribulation. Meanwhile, Parma could not bear the agony of [her illness]. The stress caused problems in her hypertension control, and tragically she succumbed. A few months before she passed away on December 28, 1979, she felt so weak and exhausted by illness (renal failure) that she woke me up one midnight and told me, " I am sorry — please forgive

me. I tried my best to lend all my support to you and stand by you during these anxious times, but now I feel my life is ebbing away and I can't last long. Please forgive me and please summon all the courage you can, to face the troubled times, singlehandedly, seeking Swamiji's comforting help and blessings."

One day Swamiji had started asking frantically for an air ticket from Srinagar to Delhi and on to Ahmedabad and told an acquaintance who had retired as Station Manager of Indian Airlines in Srinagar to get him the ticket urgently as he had to rush to see Parma, He told him that "she served me as a sincere devotee, but is now suffering very much. She was in a rush to leave this world, but was waiting just for me to say goodbye to her." And, Swamiji did arrive in Ahmedabad on the 20th of December, 1979. We were pleasantly surprised to see him enter the hospital room where Parma was waiting to be prepared for what turned out to be her last hemodialysis. He touched her forehead and looked at her intently while she folded her hands and looked back, expectantly asking for "forgiveness and release from her pain and suffering." He put his right hand twice on her forehead in a posture of blessing, then suddenly left for the temple where he was staying, then for Pune.

Parma's condition slipped downward and the hemodialysis had to be repeated, but she could not tolerate the strain and she succumbed on December 28, 1979. On that morning, Swamiji asked his host in Pune, Makhan Lal Ganju, to accompany him in a taxi to Mumbai. They left at 6:30 a.m. and at about 7:30 a.m. when Parma had passed away thousands of kilometers away in

Ahmedabad, Swamiji told Makhan Lal ji, "She had done a lot of seva to me" and referred to her in the past tense as if she had passed away. There were no mobile phones at the time and Swamiji was obviously in touch, relying on telepathy from thousands of kilometers away.

Even as an ascetic Sanyasin, Swamiji, who knew the inevitability of the tragic early end of her life at age 54, consoled and comforted us and we felt he shared our grief, too. We felt touched and overwhelmed by his tremendous compassion and humane quality, and the great gesture of his thoughtful visit all the way from Srinagar, just to bid her goodbye and try to console the bereaved.

3.6 Prediction of marriages

One day in 1976 a close relative came and broached the subject of Anil's marriage, suggesting a match to which Parma did not respond favourably. Moreover, Anil had not given her the go - ahead to look around for a suitable girl for him. Swamiji went to visit the Raghunath temple as usual, and when he returned, he asked whether any proposal had come. Parma related what had happened and he said,

"Why did you not hold on to it? Who knows about the Karma Rekha, the writ of Destiny?" She told him Anil had not agreed that we should yet look around for a match and Swamiji said, "Let us talk to him. He will agree — you start preparing to fulfill this responsibility." He repeated this firmly almost every day. After a week or so, Parma started to be bothered seriously and she asked, "Swamiji, why are you insisting on this responsibility

and sort of rushing me — do you think I don't have to live long?" He smiled and said, "You should not think such thoughts, but I tell you it is good to complete your parental responsibility. As for Anil, convey it to him from me that now is the proper time and he should give you the go -ahead. The searching around will also take time and the actual marriage can be performed in autumn." So the search started and the wedding took place on October 19, 1977. Swamiji blessed Anil and the bride while Parma and I were around. And we were amazed that the bride was none other than the one whose name came up the first day when her uncle and aunt had suggested it and Swamiji had advised Parma that "You should have held on, who knows what Karma Rekha (Destiny) has in store?"

3.7 Clairvoyance

On another occasion I went to meet Swamiji at Mr. Bhandari's house is Rainawari. I was told he had to be shifted to the hospital as his enlarged prostate was so bad that he had difficulty in passing urine. I rushed to the hospital where he was on a bed already, ready to be seen by the surgeon. Swamiji was in great discomfort, but was calm and composed and started talking to me and another visitor. I went to meet the doctor, who was well known to me, and asked him what he intended to do to manage the situation. The doctor said he would have to perform surgery. I told him that while I had full faith in his competence, I was not feeling so sure about the post -operative care, the staff and the hazards of dealing with an aged patient. I emphasized that the patient was no ordinary person, that he was a widely revered

sadhu whom a large number of people knew and cared for, and that he was quite aged — about 84 years. The doctor came to see Swamiji and talked to him. I told Swamiji what I had told the doctor and Swamiji said he had already made up his mind to go to Delhi if surgery was unavoidable, but he wanted the doctor to advise if he could travel in this condition. The doctor agreed to give him some temporary treatment, but advised that he would have to go to Delhi within the next two or three days. So arrangements had to be made. Swamiji looked at me and suddenly asked if Anil (my son) had sent any letter? I did not understand the connection and I said that Anil's letter was not expected, as he had written only a week earlier and the letters took a long time to come from Zambia, where Anil was living. He smiled and said, "You should check the mail and tell me the next day." Meanwhile, I phoned some people in Delhi and asked for an appointment for Swamiji with a urologist. I said we would be sending Swamiji by air at the soonest. Swamiji then asked me to go home.

I did find a letter awaiting me — it was from Anil — saying that he felt Swamiji would be needing some money for his personal day-to-day expenses so a demand draft for Rs. 1,275 was being sent by him. I could at once understand why Swamiji had asked about Anil's letter when an urgent need had arisen for money and I was almost at a loss on what to do. The next morning, I rushed to the hospital and handed over the bank draft to Swamiji. An officer of a local bank came over to see Swamiji at the hospital and he was asked to arrange the encashment so the airfare could be paid. We were able to fly out Swamiji to Delhi

that very day and he was examined by a well -known urologist in a reputed hospital. After surgery by that doctor (Dr. Rajan Mathews), Swamiji got over his trouble. Dr. Mathews and his wife, also a doctor working with him, discovered a strange, close bond instantly developing between them and Swamiji and felt attracted to him. On every subsequent visit to Delhi, Swamiji took them gifts like dried fruits, some Kashmiri handicrafts and once also expensive black mushrooms.

One recalls a large number of instances when those who used to visit him or who were privileged to be hosts experienced his foresight into future events. He had an uncanny way of listening to one's problem patiently, which established a rapport and a sense of reassurance. He would then take an incisive look, analyse the pros and cons and apply the flashlight of his wisdom and give his advice. Most of the time, one would get the impression that it was his probing intellectual powers and his worldly wisdom and experience that he was applying with precision and sympathetic concern. But there were other occasions when his insight probed and provided a flash into the darker penumbra of events still in the distant future. But there was always a condition. One could not hustle him into providing an answer — he would listen and take some time to think and then say that he would get back to you at the time and on the day for which he made the next appointment. And, you had to present yourself punctually at the time he had chosen. At the meeting at the fixed time you did not have to repeat the question — he would light a cigarette and with a faraway look, speak out. If you missed the appointment, you would miss the

answer. And if you met him later and asked again, he would say in a mild tone, “Aaye nahein” (You did not come on the fixed date). Then he would give you another date or maybe give you the answer.

On certain occasions, he would get his vision and give you hints on his own.

3.8 Indirect help via an instrument

Once a young man came to visit Mr. Labru to meet Swamiji. He was accompanied by a friend of his who had spoken highly to him about the effectiveness of Swamiji’s blessings. This young man had been on the lookout for a job and had been trying hard to get into the banking or the insurance field. He was introduced to Swamiji by his friend, who pleaded for him and said this young man was the only one to support his family, including his parents and his two unmarried sisters. He said the young man was in distress as his father had retired from his job and could not make ends meet. Swamiji told him that he should come and see him at Mr. Labru’s place as soon as he learnt about any specific opportunity or response to his applications.

It so happened that one day, a month later, the young man came to Mr. Labru’s house and began asking frantically for Swamiji. Mr. Labru told him that Swamiji had left for his usual move to Jammu and Delhi. The young man was very much shocked. Mr. Labru asked,

“What is the matter?” He said he had heard from the bank in response to his application, and that he would be called for an interview shortly. Mr. Labru did not know when, if at all, Swamiji

would return, as sometimes he would pay a visit suddenly from Jammu or Delhi. The young man was full of faith in Swamiji and was in dire need of his help and blessings. A few days later, he came again and told Mr. Labru that he had received an interview letter and would have to appear before the interview board in three days. Mr. Labru saw the letter and asked the young man to have a cup of tea. Mr. Labru started asking him the likely questions he would expect. The young man said he may be asked about banking in general, about the banking service and if he would suggest any improvement, and also about current affairs in general. Mr. Labru said he agreed and then told the young man that if he had Swamiji's blessings — even if he was not present physically — the help might come. As luck would have it, Mr. Labru received a letter the next day inviting him to sit on the interview board of the bank, as an outsider and an educationist. When the young man went for the Interview, he was pleasantly surprised to see Mr. Labru on the board. The banking people asked him about his qualifications and his experience, and any suggestions we would offer to improve banking service from the consumer's point of view. He answered questions with confidence and without hesitation, and he was selected.

The next day, he came to visit Mr. Labru and told him he felt that Swamiji was encouraging him and guiding him with the answers, and now he could understand why Swamiji had asked him to visit Mr. Labru's house as soon as he got an interview call. Mr. Labru told him that it was only two days earlier, just before the actual interview date and after the young man left his house on the day of their chat over a cup of tea, that he got the invitation from the

bank.

3.9 Insightful advice to my children on strategic relocation

3.9.1 My elder son Sidhartha

Sidhartha was running a business in Ahmedabad between 1977 and 1990. Prior to 1990, Swamiji gave Sidhartha many hints that he would be settling overseas. In 1991, Sidhartha got an opportunity to visit the U.S.A. To prepare for the visit, he went from Ahmedabad to Delhi to get his visa and the foreign exchange. Upon his arrival in Delhi, his uncle Colonel Raina told him that Swamiji had just arrived in Delhi from Srinagar and the first thing he asked was "Has Sidhartha come?" Since Colonel Raina had no clue, he had told him he didn't know that Sidhartha was planning a visit to Delhi. Sidhartha was amazed how Swamiji, who was at Srinagar, knew, while his visit to Delhi was unknown to anyone except his wife in Ahmedabad.

Sidhartha went to see Swamiji who told him, "You know Bhagwati has plans for you. It is good you have taken the initiative, although you wasted about two and a half years already. So you have the blessings. You grab this opportunity, work hard there and you will get a job, and with honest sustained effort and with Bhagwati's grace, will thrive there professionally as well as financially."

Sidhartha asked, "But what about my family? My son Vimarsh is in his first year studying engineering at REC Jaipur, and my daughter Sonal is still at school."

Swamiji replied, "They will also follow you — All will do very well. The path is set. Bhagwati's Grace is with you all. Initially you will

get moral and other support from your sister and your cousin, who are there already."

Sidhartha asked, "And my father?"

Swamiji replied, " He will be visiting you and your younger brother Anil and your sister Malini often. He will be in good health and have a long life. Don't worry. Have faith in Bhagwati."

This enabled Sidhartha to strengthen his resolve. He flew to Washington, D.C. in September 1991, landing in the house of his sister Malini and her husband, Dr. Lokesh Bazaz. He started working hard, preparing applications for job opportunities. He was offered a job in a private company that sponsored his immigration. This was the starting step of a small and humble beginning, but a satisfying one professionally. Subsequently, the second step of moving his family (Asha, Vimarsh and Sonal) took place smoothly. Vimarsh had tried for a visa also, but the U.S. consulate had not agreed. He went to Bombay along with his mother and sister to try again. By then, he had received admission to a degree course at a U.S. university. The visas were granted. We prepared for their forward journey. I conveyed the news to Swamiji in Jammu, then I accompanied them to Bombay.

3.9.2 My daughter Malini

Malini and her husband, Lokesh, came from London in about September 1975 to look up their expanded joint family in Srinagar and meet Parma and me. Anil had also come to visit from Delhi; Lokesh had been wanting to move to the U.S.A. It was a leap into the unknown, as they did not have jobs there. So

when Malini and he came over to my place, they wanted to seek Swamiji's blessings. Swamiji lit a cigarette and with his faraway look said, “Yes, in March you’ll get a job and will settle in America.” Lokesh told him that the visa they had received necessitated them to enter the U.S.A not later than December. Swamiji repeated, “Yes, I told you that you will get a job there in March.”

They went to the U.S.A. in December, and Lokesh started a job hunt there. He met no success in January and February, and seemed to lose hope. They were living with a cousin of Lokesh’s near New York City. Then they had been invited by Malini’s cousin in Montreal, Canada to visit and stay for some time. They started losing patience. Malini recalled Swamiji’s repeated assurance of “March” and it so happened that after the long period of frustration and disappointment, Lokesh got a call from his cousin that he received an offer in a New York hospital and he could start from the first of March. And he did. Malini wrote to me from her new address how relieved they felt and how remarkably accurate Swamiji’s foresight and prediction had been.

They too developed lot of faith in Swamiji. In 1982, Lokesh felt very strongly the pull of India and his large family there and moved from Washington to Delhi to try and establish his medical practice there. He gave it a try for about ten months, but found it difficult and frustrating: the work culture, the environment and the system. Their daughter Komal (age 6) was admitted to school. She was her very unhappy with the change of school from the US and all that she wanted of anyone who would listen

was to persuade them to speak to her father Lokesh and urge him to go back to Washington DC. Lokesh also got very frustrated professionally. I asked Swamiji what was the way out. He said he was not happy to see Lokesh and Malini feeling so disappointed. His talent and training was being wasted and Malini had turned into just a langri (cook). He said he did not like it and would pray to Bhagwati to release them from this frustrating situation. After running around in Delhi, renting a house, a phone and even a cabin in a Polyclinic, where many doctors shared accommodation for their private practice, Lokesh went back to the U.S.A. and Malini and the children followed after two months. Lokesh was able to find a job at a clinic near Washington and rent an apartment. He had tried his best to work in Delhi and be nearer his extended family in Kashmir, but it didn't work and as foretold by Swamiji, their move back to the U.S.A. materialised.

3.9.3 My younger son Anil

Anil has been a great believer in Dharma. And he also had tremendous devotional respect for Swamiji, who bestowed his blessings on him. Whenever Anil had a problem, Swamiji would provide comfort and sustenance with his blessings, with a gentle and loving smile.

In 1978, Anil moved from Ahmedabad to Delhi to seek a job. He and his wife Manju rented an apartment in Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi. Swamiji was on a visit to Delhi and was persuaded to stay with them. He felt very happy in a room they found for him, and of course with the dedicated and caring manner with which they looked after him. From there, Anil moved to Patna and then

to Zambia. Swamiji had been telling him that he would do well, but had to work hard and travel a lot. One day while in Ahmedabad, I got a call from Anil in Zambia to tell me to seek blessings for him from Swamiji, as he had secured immigration to Australia. I told Swamiji, who was sitting nearby, and he said, ”Yes, but ask Anil to be sure about finding a job.” I asked him, “Will Anil’s move to Australia improve his future prospects?” He said, “Yes, but he will have to work hard for it.” I was apprehensive, though, since Anil had a well-paid job of responsibility in Zambia and I wasn’t sure that he had secured any job in Australia. Actually, he had none in hand when he arrived in Australia, but he had to try and secure some additional qualification from an Australian institution. This he did later and it worked.

Anil visited India several times and whenever he was there, he would meet Swamiji as often as possible in Delhi or Jammu or Srinagar and was always bestowed warmth and blessings in abundance.

In October 1989, I had gone to meet Anil in Delhi, who was on a visit to India, and after staying with him for a few days we had to fly to Srinagar to attend the wedding of Anil’s wife Manju’s brother. Trouble had started in Srinagar and bomb explosions had become a frequent occurrence. We were told that the journey from the airport to the venue of the wedding — Manju’s parents’ residence at Ishabar near Nishat, would be hazardous. Early that morning, unknown to me and Anil, Swamiji had engaged a taxi and gone to Ishabar, Srinagar to tell Manju, who was already there, and her parents that they should not take the

risk of going to the airport, but he would go personally and collect Anil and take him to their place. When Anil and I landed at Srinagar Airport, I met many of my old acquaintances from the local police officers and sensed a lot of tension The city had been experiencing several incidents of sporadic bomb explosions over the roads, at the bus stands and other public places like the popular, oft-visited coffee house. I started looking for a taxi, but one taxi driver who used to be a favourite of Swamiji spotted me and, taking me aside, told me that Swamiji was waiting for Anil and was sitting in a taxi nearby. I went out to see him and with a smile, he asked how the flight was. Anil and I were overwhelmed by his gracious gesture and he said we would have to bypass the city. We reached Ishabar safely and all were happy to see us.

3.10 Rescue from an accident

In 1992, we happened to visit Kanta in Bombay. She told us that Raju had called from Washington that day and said that while driving over a wet slippery road in a thunderstorm, his car skidded out of control and slipped over the edge into a depression and then turned upside down, with his little son Varun trapped with him inside the car. Raju said he had the amazing experience of a vision of Swamiji suddenly appearing to pull them out and he saw that an unknown traveller who was driving behind him had stopped and jumped into the depression and pulled them out with great difficulty. The car had suffered lot of damage but both Raju and his little son had a very miraculous escape. Raju told his mother (Kanta), he wanted his message of gratitude to be conveyed to Swamiji.

From Kanta's residence in Bombay, I called a friend of mine in Jammu, where Swamiji was staying that day, and asked him to see Swamiji and give him this news and this message. I told him I would call him again after three hours. When I called my friend again, he surprised me by saying that Swamiji seemed to be expecting to hear this news, as he asked my friend straightaway, "Did Bakaya call from Bombay? Any news from the U.S.A.?" He said Swamiji smiled upon hearing Raju's message and said, "Ask Raju to have faith in Bhagwati and be careful always."

Chapter 4: Healing Touch

4.1 Healing ash for a child

One day Swamiji went to the house of a family that he used to visit or even stay with for a day or two at a time. The gentleman wasn't there — nor even his wife — but their six year -old girl was the only one present and she was whining with pain from a boil on her thigh. She could not stand, but managed to open the door for Swamiji. He asked her if she could make a cup of tea for him as he was feeling thirsty. She said, "I can but today I am in great pain. Oh!" "What is wrong?," asked Swamiji. "I have a big painful boil, which has been giving me fever, too," she replied. "Oh, Where is it?," he asked. She said, "I can't show it — I am ashamed." Swamiji lit his cigarette and dropped a little ash on her hand, and asked her to apply it on the boil. She went to the other room and put the cigarette ash on the top of the very tense boil, which was not even ripe for lancing. She was relieved of the pain and bounced into Swamiji's room, telling him she could make a cup of tea, which she soon produced! While Swamiji was having tea, which he was appreciating as very good, and asking the child how she learnt to make such nice tea, her mother walked in. She apologised to Swamiji for being late, as she had been expecting him for lunch. She asked her daughter who had made the tea? said the daughter replied, "I did," on which the mother asked, "But how could you? What about your boil and the awful pain it has been causing — even immobilizing you?" The girl answered, "Oh, Mama Swamiji, has such power,

the boil is healed already — I'll show you that there is such magic in Swamiji's cigarette ash." The mother wondered and looked at Swamiji with reverential awe and Swamiji said, "Bakwasi Ladki," meaning "What a talkative little girl." Later on when Parma told him the story that the lady had related to her, he guessed that there was a question in Parma's mind! So he said, "The little girl is a form of the Divine Mother, who is always a living presence. How could I bear to see her in pain and suffering? So I invoked, by praying to Bhagwati to relieve her of the pain and spare me the suffering I felt." [Refer Note 8]

4.2 Rushing to help an ailing devotee

At one time Swamiji was staying in a house at Jammu distant from mine. I was alone in my house, and he wasn't strong enough to go up the stairs to the first floor where I lived while I had rented out the ground floor. My helper, Roshan Lal, used to help Swamiji also during the daytime and Swamiji wanted me to give him company during lunchtime. One day, I noticed that he had received some fresh vegetables from Kashmir — his host had got it along by air — and he asked Roshan Lal to cook it in the Kashmiri Hindu style at our place and bring the cooked food for him next morning. I felt privileged to be asked. So the next morning the food was prepared and Roshan Lal and I took it to the house where Swamiji lived. We were disappointed to find that Swamiji wasn't there. I enquired from his hosts and learnt that Swamiji had woken up at 4 a.m. and asked for a taxi to take him to Srinagar (a distance of about 300 kilometers over a hilly terrain) and left in a hurry, brushing aside all pleadings and

protestations. I returned home. When I went to visit Swamiji after three days,I told him I had brought the food as he had directed, but found that he had suddenly gone away to Srinagar. Swamiji said, “Bach gaya” (“He was saved”). I did not understand, so I asked if he would want to clarify. He named the person whose house he used to visit and said that man was in acute trouble, running a high fever which went up and up to 105 degree, which had made him delirious and thrown the whole household in a tizzy of tension and anxiety, but then he recovered.

I could not understand — how Swamiji kept track and intervened to relieve pain and suffering. I was reminded of his example of opening out and holding an umbrella.

The gentleman in question, Mr. Labru, related this incident to me after a few months. He said that while he was in great pain and anxiety due to the sudden serious turn in his ailment, he heard a knock at his gate at about 2 p.m. and his wife looked out the window and told him she was seeing Swamiji in a taxi. Swamiji asked, “How is Labru?” She said, “He is very ill” and there were tears in her eyes. Swamiji said, “I know, why have I come from Jammu? I will be back in the evening and I hope he will be better. Please do not worry.” Later in the evening, Mr. Labru was feeling better and could talk to Swamiji when he visited to look him up. The next day he returned to Jammu in the same taxi.

4.3 Coalition with a local saint

One summer day in Srinagar, I woke up with a splitting headache, which made me restless. A coldwater bath did not

help. Nor did a cup of tea. I decided to take a day off from my office and consult a physician in the hospital. A doctor friend examined me and said that it was nothing serious. He gave me a painkiller. I was not agreeable as I had noticed on an earlier occasion that I was allergic to some drugs. I wanted to know what was wrong rather than be given a symptomatic treatment. I was, however, persuaded to take a mild medicine back at home. I could not get any rest. The food did not help. I could not sleep during the night. For six days, I lay in bed, tossing from side to side, without rest or sleep and I felt exhausted. On the fifth day, I went to the hospital again and consulted one of the best physicians, who was also a kind friend. He made a thorough exam and did not want any tests done. Like others, I had considerable faith in his clinical sense. He consoled me and advised that I should forget about the headache and start attending to my work in the office. I told him he was only giving me his good wishes rather than treating my ailment, which was more real than he would concede. Since I felt no relief from my condition, I decided to consult another leading physician, who would be available in the hospital the following day.

Immediately after daybreak the next day, while I was feeling very uncomfortable, I heard someone coming up the stairs leading to my room. I saw a person, dressed in a robe that could in some distant past have been white but was now full of dark and dirty blots. Despite his forbidding apparel, he seemed a pleasant person. He was followed by a number of street urchins who told me that he was called Hara Kak, a mendicant in whose miraculous powers many people had faith. As he entered, I

bowed to him in respect. He said, “Where is my daughter, your wife? Why are you in this plight? What have you made of yourself? This is no real or serious trouble” Parma heard this hustle and bustle and looked out the kitchen window; one of the boys called her and she came over. She had seen the mendicant earlier from a distance. Now that he was in our home, she showed him due respect. He told her that I should not be starved, but that she should prepare some good nourishing food and give me plenty of curds. She made some tea quickly and gave it to him too, and just then, Swamiji walked up the stairs and joined us.

The two of them (Swamiji and Hara Kak) exchanged mysterious glances and Hara Kak offered Swamiji a seat and said to Parma and me, “I do not know why Swamiji should have called me in here.” Swamiji said with a smile, “ Did I?” It was obvious that he had sent some signal on the spiritual plane, which is beyond our comprehension or logic. Swamiji said to him, “ Now that you have come, please relieve his pain.” Hara Kak said to me, “Do you see how he uses me?” and turning to Swamiji said, “You could give him some little rock candy or a crystal of sugar with your blessings but you did not do anything while he suffered from many days?” Hara Kak then told me, “You should not worry. Go to consult the other doctor today as planned. I don’t need to come again for this.” After a while, Hara Kak left. I asked Swamiji, “What is going on? I do not know Hara Kak. I had not met him before.” Swamiji just smiled, lit a cigarette and said, “Do as he has advised.”

I went to the hospital and met the other doctor, who pushed a

needle up my nose to relieve my sinuses. Although this was painful and I winced, I suddenly felt the pain subsiding. The intensity of my headache was waning. I was given some medicine and upon my return home, I enjoyed a good meal for the first time in six or seven days. The next day, I felt normal enough to attend to my job.

I reflected on this. Why couldn't the ENT specialist who examined when I first visited the hospital diagnose the problem with my sinuses? Why didn't the other leading doctor think of checking me for this himself before referring me to another doctor? Why was it that the other leading doctor was the one who cross -checked and finally found my sinuses blocked? I thought there was something in the theory that everything has its time. My suffering had to run a course that seemed fixed. And then the intervention of the Swamiji — Hara Kak coalition? What to make of that mystery? As Hara Kak said, it was very much within Swamiji's power to intervene, but he did not want Parma and me to associate his power with any such miracle. We experienced many such instances of compassion and caring on Swamiji's part while he was very cautious and reluctant in creating any impression that would encourage us to believe he had powers of miracle -making. But one could not miss the point.

4. 4 Surgery without the aid of anaesthesia

One day in Delhi, Swamiji started having an acute pain and he had to be hospitalised. The doctor advised immediate surgery, but when the doctor asked his junior and his nurses to check Swamiji's blood pressure and heart condition, they found that

administering anaesthesia would be very risky. The doctor was in a dilemma — the need for the surgery was very urgent and it could not be performed without anaesthesia. Sensing that the doctor and the attending person, Colonel Raina, were in some dilemma, Swamiji asked, “What is the matter?” and the doctor told him. Swamiji said, “Why don’t you proceed with the surgery without the aid of anaesthesia?” “No Swamiji, it will be very painful and it is very risky, too,” the doctor said. Swamiji said, “But you say that surgery is unavoidable — how long will it take?” The doctor said it would take 45 to 50 minutes. Swamiji said, “Then proceed, but just tell me when you start applying the surgical knife and then wake me up when you finish.” This was a very difficult task and the doctor was at his wits’ end. He had never had an experience of this kind and Swamiji was 84 years old. Since Swamiji seemed so very confident and authoritative in what he said, the doctor started off and told Swamiji, “Swamiji, I am starting,” and noted the time. The surgical operation began, with the doctor’s hands unsteady and trembling. Beads of sweat turned into a little stream on his forehead, which he had to ask the nurse to wipe off occasionally. Swamiji was in a deep slumber the whole time and his face showed no expression of pain during the cutting. When the doctor finished, he looked at the watch and found that 45 minutes had passed, so he gently spoke, “ Swamiji, we are through, the operation has been successful.” Swamiji woke up and thanked the doctor. It was as if he had had a nice, restful nap. The doctor did not know what to say; he just knelt to pay his homage with devotion. Swamiji said, “Bhagwati’s desire — no credit to me!”

Chapter 5: The importance of keeping one's word

One or two incidents stand in my memory. One day in December, in my house in Jammu, Swamiji woke up at about 5 a.m. and started moving towards the kitchen to look for our family helper Roshan Lal. Hearing his light footsteps in the passage, I got out of bed and walked over from my bedroom without disturbing Parma, who was fast asleep. I asked Swamiji what he wanted. He said he would like to have a cup of tea without disturbing me or Bhabhi (Parma). I made a cup of tea for Swamiji. He wanted me to sit down and write. He dictated a detailed list of things he would need for a grand havan that he would have to perform at Tulamul in Kashmir in the coming month of May. When I looked at the list and made a quick calculation of the cost, I realised that the havan would involve an expenditure of about Rs. 5,000, which was a much larger amount than we were used to spending. I didn't say anything, but Swamiji at once gazed at me with a smile and said, "Bhagwati wants this done — we have to feed her through a large number of people and ensure as wide participation as we can, among those whom we know as devout believers in Bhagwati who have faith and commitment. I am sure Bhagwati will help us."

During the day, after his lunch, Swamiji left for his usual visit to the Raghunath temple. When he came back in the evening, he handed over about Rs. 3,000 to Parma from the collection on that day and dictated a list of those who had contributed, and also those who had promised. The amount would exceed Rs.

4,000.

The next day a friend of mine, Mr. Daya Ram, came to visit. He met Swamiji and offered to provide two bags (200 kg) of excellent quality rice and 16 litres of edible oil, and some ghee. Swamiji said he would accept rice as his contribution for the havan if he offered it, but insisted on paying for the oil and the ghee. He also said he wanted 500 kg of rice and would pay for 300 kg, but it should all be of a uniformly high quality. He asked him for the price, which I noted down. He called Parma to get the cash he had deposited with her and paid an advance of Rs. 1,250/ to the gentleman, asking him to meet him again by the end of March, so that the details could be worked out about the timing and place of delivery.

On March 20, the gentleman came again, along with two of his friends -one was the proprietor of an oil -producing concern of a popular brand of mustard oil, and the other was a Muslim friend who wanted to see and pay homage to Swamiji, about whom he had heard many good things. My friend told Swamiji that his Muslim friend — Mr. Ali Mohammed Nayak — was in politics and was very keen to become a minister, and wanted Swamiji's blessings. Swamiji said without hesitation, "He has to become a minister, with Bhagwati's grace, but why is he in a hurry? It is going to happen at the proper time. There has to be a proper time for everything. He should be prepared to serve the poor people sincerely, as a God fearing person." Swamiji spoke this casually in a spontaneous response. I knew he was reading Mr. Nayak's future as an open book visible to him alone. As a matter of fact, Mr. Nayak was appointed Minister in the J&K

Government two or three years later. Then Swamiji asked my friend Daya Ram to finalise the details of the quantities of rice, ghee and oil that he would send to Srinagar. The oil merchant offered to send the oil without accepting any payment. Swamiji politely declined his free offer, but said he had no objection if a concession price was offered. This was agreed. Then he asked Daya Ram to quote the price for rice and ghee and asked me to note it down, so we could calculate how much we owed him. After this, the three of them took leave of Swamiji and I went downstairs to accompany them to their waiting car.

I was just saying goodbye to them when I heard Parma calling me frantically and in a panic, asking me to rush upstairs to Swamiji's room. She said Swamiji was in a fiery mood of anger. Parma said, "Oh no, I am afraid Daya Ram might come to harm." So I rushed to Swamji's room. Seeing him, I too was fear -stricken. I had never seen him in such an awful mood. I bowed down to ask him what had happened and entreated him to forgive. He shouted, "What does this man think of himself? How dare he deceive Bhagwati? How dare he make light of his promise made solemnly to her?" I didn't understand, but was too scared to ask. Swamiji wanted me to bring up the notebook in which I had noted the prices that Daya Ram had quoted on his last visit, and on which basis he had paid him an advance of Rs. 1,250. I discovered that the new prices Daya Ram had asked for now were higher. I pleaded on behalf of Daya Ram that he was rather absent -minded and carefree and had obviously made a mistake. I said that I would speak to Daya Ram and tell him he would be paid the prices he had quoted us earlier and against which he had

accepted the advance payment. The flash of angry expression that had made Swamiji's face frighteningly red passed. After about two hours, I asked him if I should ring Daya Ram, to which he agreed. When I rang up, Daya Ram's wife picked up the phone and muttered a few words amidst sobs, wailing "I am feeling I've been robbed! Daya has had a profuse bleeding and we have had to rush him to the State Hospital, where he is having a blood transfusion. His condition seems very serious. Please pray for him. I'm going to the hospital, too." I tried to console her and said that Parma and I would join her in the hospital and to meanwhile know that our sincerest prayers are with Daya. I told Swamiji. He replied, "He had to suffer for his carelessness with his words spoken in the presence of Bhagwati, but now you go to see him. Calculate how much excess money he meant to earn out of his indiscretion. That will be the amount he will have to spend at the hospital and he should be all right in a day or two, when he will be sent home." Parma and I went to the hospital to see Daya — I saw a large number of VIP's and the cream of the business community running around in anxiety. Daya Ram was the President of the city Chamber of Commerce. I went into the Intensive Care Unit and saw Daya getting a blood transfusion. I could not speak with him, but Parma and I told his wife that we had assurances that Daya will be all right. And so it happened.

Chapter 6: No discrimination between Hindus and Muslims

6.1 The Kashmir heritage of Muslim sufi saints also called rishis

Many saints and savants were attracted to visit and stay in Kashmir (please refer Note 8 for one of the famous sayings of Lal Ded) which has been known for its symbiosis of basic eternal spiritual truths in all religions.

We have learnt from our precious heritage of the large galaxy of saints "the creed of tolerance — which is much beyond the non - existence of intolerance but a positive attitude of seeking good for all without distinction of caste or creed or religion."

In an ordinary sense those who came in contact with Swamiji were attracted to him by his attainments and austere self discipline and *tapasya.* His humane treatment of everyone without distinction of caste or creed, religion or gender or age established a valuable and durable bond between them and him. This was a cardinal fact of Swamiji's practice. We marvelled at the way he attracted a large number of Muslims, who felt the power of his impact as a great soul who treated all equally. They came to him with their personal woes and worries or problems and he listened patiently, they developed a faith not only in his sympathetic understanding but also in the suggestions or advice or assurance he gave them.

One of the prayers that is part of the Hymns he used for recitation at his havans was :

Pranata naam praseeda twam

Devi Vishwariti haarini

Traiya lokivaasana meaday

Lokaa naam Vardaa bhava

“OH Mother Divine you can destroy the pain and suffering in the world, we beseech you, kindly be pleased and bless all people of the three worlds”.

6.2 Visit to Baba Rishi tomb and shrine in Gulmarg (pre -1947)

Mr Amar Nath Moza told me that prior to 1947 Swamiji visited the tomb and shrine or "Ziarat" of the noted Muslim saint Baba Rishi in Gulmarg, Kashmir. The shrine was built in 1480; Baba Rishi was a courtier to the king Zain-ul-Abidin and a disciple of Sheikh Noor-ud-din Noorani, a contemporary of Lal Ded. Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir had lot of faith in these three famous Kashmiri saints. When Swamiji visited the Baba Rishi shrine (accompanied by Mr Moza) there was an old Muslim lady who greeted and told him she had been waiting for him for a year. Swamiji said something to the effect "All right, now you can go."

6.3 Love and compassion for the poor

Swamiji would look upon the Hindus and Muslims first and foremost as human beings. We knew a large number of Muslims who revered him. On one occasion, while a havan was being performed under Swamiji’s instructions at Khir Bhavani, a Muslim gentleman came to see him and presented two or three large boxes full of very nice apples. Swamiji distributed these to all those who participated in the havan. I asked someone who this Muslim gentleman was and how he had come to know Swamiji. He told me that about 20 years earlier when he was a child, he lost his father, who had earned his livelihood as a poor

peasant in Sopore. He, his mother and two little sisters felt devastated and lost. All they had was a small shelter of two rooms and a little stock of food grains. Many of her friends and relatives were shocked to hear of the sudden and tragic loss of her young husband. She did not want to remarry because of her three children, as she was keen to raise them somehow, but she was at a loss to know what to do. Her eldest child was just 10 years old. In those days, Swamiji used to visit Sopore and would sometimes stay there for two or three days. A large number of people, both Hindus and Muslims, in the vicinity of the house where he stayed came to know of him as a saint who attracted people for his simplicity and out -flowing kindness to people, without any distinction of caste or creed. People in trouble or distress went to see him often and felt comforted every time.

The widow was advised by an acquaintance of hers to see Swamiji. She took her 10 -year -old boy along and met Swamji. At first, she hesitated to speak, but when she saw many others, including Muslim men and women, also there, she sought Swamiji's attention. She found him very kind and sympathetic. She told him of her tragedy. Swamiji consoled her and asked her to bring the child again the next day. She did so. Swamiji told her that nothing could be done to avert the tragedy, as it had been destined. The child and his mother were advised by Swamiji to accept the will of the Almighty, and put the past behind them to think of and build their future. They felt confused and were at a loss for what to do, given their nearly non -existent resources. Swamiji advised them to convert one room of the ground floor of their house for use as a shop. Swamiji asked one of his

acquaintances in Sopore to provide this boy with some medicines, and also persuaded a doctor to use the shop for seeing patients and prescribing treatments. In time, the business prospered and the family was able to add a few rooms to the house and later on buy a piece of land for use as an orchard. In his first visit, Swamiji had given them his “Parna” (a muslin wrap of saffron colour which he used often). After a few years the young man and his mother requested Swamiji to pay them a second visit. There had been quite a transformation! Swamji told them it was all due to the Almighty, whom he worshipped in the form of the Omnipotent Divine Mother.

When the gentleman came to visit Swamiji at the havan site in Khir Bhavani he distributed among those present the fruit and almonds that they offered him. “Can I take back my Parna?” he asked. “No, Swamiji, we cherish this as a symbol of your kindness and your greatness.” So they retained it.

This is what that gentleman of Sopore told me when the two big boxes of delicious apples from his own orchard were brought to Tulamul and distributed by Swamiji among the crowd present for his havan. He gave the gentleman a few apples to take to his old mother and his family. When he looked at these, he was surprised that the number of apples Swamiji gave him was exactly the same as the number of his family members on that day.

Swamiji, in bestowing kindness, did not make any distinctions. Among the Muslims who came into contact with him, we could count a large number who had some personal experience to recollect. Many Muslim men and women visited him, pouring

out their woes or just sitting around, patiently watching. And for everyone, Swamji had a word of comfort, even a reassuring remark on the individual's problems, which would surprise and impress the person with its quick incisiveness as he went promptly to the heart of the problem. He gave a suggestion or two that, though expressed in simple language, always charged with the power of the flashlight of his foreseeing mind. They would feel satisfied and would repeat their visit with renewed faith.

He always told us that the Divine Mother, Bhagwati, whose presence he experienced vividly most of the time, made no discrimination on the basis of religious differences, as the entire universe and all that happened was the manifestation of her will and play. There were numerous instances where Swamji practised this belief himself, in a natural and spontaneous manner.

For the poor and the deprived, he had a special outgoing concern and love. He would seek them out and extend financial help to them, or provide them food, apart from words of comfort. The taxi drivers — mainly Kashmiri Muslims -on whom he relied for his movements were paid by him the regular fares that was due, and he knew the Government -sanctioned fares, which he would not allow the driver to exceed. But he would take full care of the driver, providing him food and tea or cash for a mid -day meal if the driver got detained on duty with Swamiji. These taxi drivers had developed so much faith in the visible and invisible bounties that they felt he bestowed on them that there used to be a scramble between them. Swamiji would resolve this with a kind

word and a kinder look. I once asked a few of his favourite taxi drivers why they were so keen to serve him. One said he had noticed that whenever Swamiji rode with him, his taxi kept busy with a quick flow of many other passengers even until midnight and he used to earn double the average daily earning on that particular day, apart from what Swamiji used to pay him. Another one repeated the same kind of experience and also added that Swamiji helped him with a word of recommendation with some authority, or just assured him that a particular problem that was nagging him would be resolved within a given time — and this would happen.

6.4 Prediction of blessings from the Goddess of Fortune

6.4.1 Bhadrakaali Havan

I recall my memories of Swamiji, visits to our house in Jammu as well as to the government houses rented out to me in Srinagar. One day, he had decided on a havan at a place called Bhadrakaali, a village near Sopore, approximately 60 kilometers from Srinagar. Parma and my cousin Sona and her husband Amarnath Moza, and my advocate friend T.N. Dullu and his wife went to attend the havan. I could not go. Upon their return, Parma related their experience.

Swamiji had taken along six Brahmins from Srinagar. As stated above, he had a panel of names of those whom he trusted to do the recitations correctly and with the necessary amount of devotion. The priest of the Bhaderkaali temple was not in that panel. So Swamiji asked him politely to leave the place free during the havan, which lasted for about 6 hours. He was paid

some money for this. He accepted this, but he resented his ouster. Parma said that all through the havan, recitations and offerings into the fire, the atmosphere was surcharged with a strange aura and they felt as if the proximity of the divine Mother was a visible reality. Parma told me she had no other thoughts. She had, however, caught a glimpse of a Muslim gentleman sitting throughout in the shade of a tree outside the temple gate. When time came for the final offerings (Purna aahuti), everyone stood up and there was a loud chant of hymns that filled the air. Swamiji led the Purna aahuti with a coconut as part of the usual mix of dried fruit, sugar, barley, rice and ghee. The flames rose and Swamiji bent into these for about ten seconds, which to everyone around him seemed a long time. When he lifted his head, he was in a trance, his forehead and his scalp were singed and bruised and the few little hairs on it were burnt. He recovered after a while as everyone waited with bated breath. He picked up the havan tilak and starting putting it by turns on the foreheads of those in the queue. He then called over the Muslim gentleman — who was watching all this, standing like the others — and beckoned him to come nearer, and he put a tilak on his forehead too. Something overwhelmed the gentlemen and he did not resist, though Muslims do not believe in this kind of religious practice, which is that only of Hindus.

The temple priest, already smarting under his ouster, started deriding what Swamiji had done. He was also called for the tilak and later, for lunch. After that, as people started on their return journey, the priest stated that he was very apprehensive over

the bad effect this breach of the difficult and delicate chandi havan might have: the fact that a tilak for the havan offering was put on the forehead of a non -believing Muslim. But he would not dare to ask Swamiji directly.

It so happened that Swamiji came over to our home at Tulsibagh that evening to spend the night there. He looked very tired and after a cup of tea, he rested for an hour or so until dinner was ready.

He then asked Parma how she thought the havan went. She told him it was a great experience for her, as far as she felt it. She asked Swamiji for his comment on the incident about which the temple priest had been commenting adversely. Swamiji lit his cigarette and smiled and said: “Well, the priest is ignorant. All I do is to obey the command of Divine Mother. I felt that here was this gentleman on whom Mother was about to bestow her Grace and pick him up to a position of prominence and honour. I just obeyed the signal from Mother and put a mark of our holy tilak from the havan on his forehead. So better wait and keep an eye.”

After a few months, elections were held for the state legislative assembly and the Muslim gentleman was picked up by the ruling party and given a mandate: he was elected, then was included in the government as a Minister of State.

He started looking for Swamiji and tracked him down after a few months. He had been told that Swamiji could be found at my home, so he came one day to my place when we were in Jammu and asked me where Swamiji could be located. I told him that Swamiji stayed with me, but had gone out and was expected

back in the evening. He wanted me to seek an appointment with Swamiji for him. When Swamiji returned in the evening after his usual walk and visit to the Raghunath temple, I told him about the Minister's visit. I said he had told me that he owed everything to Swamiji's bounty and grace and that he and his family were very keen to meet him and pay their respects. Swamiji said, "What does he want now? All that Bhagwati had for him is now given to him. Why should he bother me?" I pleaded with Swamiji that since I was serving in the State Government, the minister might be annoyed with me if Swamiji would refuse to see him. He then asked me to convey to the minister that he would meet him at the minister's official residence on the coming Sunday at 4 p.m.

I went with him in the conveyance that the minister had sent over. We saw the minister, who had put on lot of weight so it was difficult to recognise him, waiting anxiously. He came over to receive Swamiji at the entrance with utmost respect. He had lined up dried fruits, almonds, cashews and sweets in large bowls of shining stainless steel. Swamiji asked him to call all his family members and also his security guards, and he picked up handfuls of the things and distributed everything among those present — about 25 people in all. He lit a cigarette and took leave. The minister asked him to pick up something to eat. He did, just a tiny bit of a sweet and a small piece from a peeled banana. Then we left. The minister came out to bid him farewell and we went home.

6.4.2 Minister in J&K State

I can recall one more instance of his great powers of foresight. On one winter day in 1975, Begum Sajdaji brought over the former Chief Minister Mr. G.M. Sadiq's sister, Begum Zainab, to meet Swamiji at our home in Gandhinagar, Jammu. Swamiji seemed extra -courteous and called in our helper to rush and get some sweets and snacks, and he insisted that Begum Zainab should take as much as he gave her with his own hand. Of course, he distributed to everyone present — Parma and myself and our helper included. But he was very generous and insistent in his hospitality to Begum Zainab. As she was leaving, she told him she was planning to go to Srinagar the next day. He asked Begum Zainab to see him again when she returned. She said she had no plans to come during the next few months. He told her, "No, you have to come again. They will ask you to come, and don't refuse — you have to accept." I don't think what Swamiji wanted to convey was clear to her, but as I knew Swamiji's way of dropping hints of what he saw coming in the future, I made a note of this remark and his confident tone, and the whole attitude and seriousness of his conveying the hint. After the guests left, Parma and I sat with Swamiji. Parma spoke, "Swamiji, may I ask a question, if you don't mind?" He gave her a smile and said, "I know what is bothering you right at this moment, but ask." Parma said, "Swamiji I noticed that when Begum Zainab came here, you seemed over -pleased and over -generous, which I felt was extraordinary — at this her second visit after more than a year. Is it because the rich or important people deserve better hospitality and treatment even at your hands?" Parma was feeling nervous at blurting out the last sentence. She felt

apprehensive that this question and its plain and unsophisticated tone would annoy Swamiji, but she had uttered the thought as it came to her mind. Swamiji liked her sincerity and frankness, and was certain that she was genuine and there was no malice or bad feeling in her mind. Swamiji smiled and said, “Well, the reason is simple, you can’t know what I see. When I react to a person or a situation, it is not me but Bhagwati who tells me here is a person I am pleased with. He or she is being honoured and raised in status, so the person deserves respect even in advance, and what I do is only obey what Bhagwati indicates to me.” After almost three months, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah would be Chief Minister of J&K State, and he was asked to choose his coalition cabinet. The Congress President, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah had an accord, which provided that she nominate a member of the Congress for the coalition cabinet. She chose Begum Zainab as one of her nominees from the Congress Party. Sheikh Saheb was not happy; Zainab felt embarrassed and very uncomfortable at the thought of working with Sheikh Abdullah in his cabinet, as she had been very vehemently opposed him all along, and very unhappy with his past advocacy of sentiments, for which he was detained and removed from active politics for about 22 years. Sheikh Saheb told Mrs. Gandhi that Zainab would not agree, and that he wanted her to nominate someone else. But Mrs. Gandhi spoke to Zainab on phone and told her she would be representing her and the Congress Party, and she desired that Zainab should join. Thereupon, Begum Zainab conveyed her agreement and was asked to come over to Jammu for the swearing -in ceremony.

After that, Zainab Begum paid a visit to Swamiji at our house. Only three months had elapsed since her earlier visit and Swamiji told her, “Remember what I told you — that you have to come, and I said that you should not refuse when they ask you to accept.” She had no difficulty recalling that incident, which she said had not registered with her at that time.

Parma and I realized once again the reality of Swamiji’s prowess in seeing the future and his inimitable way of dropping significant but subtle hints to prepare the subject or the listener.

6.4.3 Minister in Centre

Swamiji did not stay at one place for long. He visited Delhi very often from Srinagar or Jammu. I recollect that on one occasion while I, Begum Sajda and a friend accompanied Swamiji to the Jammu airport to help him to embark for Delhi, a well -known political leader, Mufti Mohammed Syed, also came to the airport, as he too was travelling to Delhi on the same flight. He knew me very well and greeted me, asking if I was also taking the same flight to Delhi. I introduced him to Swamiji. Begum Sajda also introduced Mufti Saheb as a prominent politician. Swamiji told her, "Naam sunna hai" (“I have heard his name.”) Mufti Saheb enquired where Swamiji would be staying in Delhi and whether he would need a lift from the Delhi airport. Swamiji told him someone would be picking him up. When the flight started boarding, Mufti Saheb voluntarily lifted Swamiji's bag. Swamiji was overwhelmed by this kind gesture and said to me, "Bichari bag uthaya" (“Very nice of him to pick up my bag”). A few days later, when Swamiji returned from Delhi, he told me that Mufti Saheb had helped him at the Delhi airport and had dropped him

at the temple where he was staying. He repeated with a sense of wonder, "Bichari bag uthaya" and then surmised, "Bhagwati ki kripa hogi" ("He will be blessed by Bhagwati"). And Swamiji asked me to convey his good wishes for Mufti Saheb which I did. To our pleasant surprise we later heard that Mufti Syed Saheb had been appointed Home Minister in the Central cabinet.

6.5 Warning and prevention of misfortune before purchase of house

A Muslim couple who among other Muslims who had been meeting Swamiji often had developed great faith in his predictions and advice. On one occasion they came to tell him that they had been on the lookout for purchasing a suitable residential house for themselves. They told Swamiji that they had been able to find a suitable house and made an advance payment to the owner. Swamiji asked them for the location of the house and they informed him of this. He lit a cigarette and after a few minutes he seemed to wake up from his reverie and told them "I see a cloud of misfortune hanging over the house. I would advise you to cancel the purchase, recover the advance or even to write it off; then look for a more suitable house." They were startled and they thought they would wait for a week or so and think about this advice. In the following week they heard a large portion of the house had some defect which damaged and caused a collapse of one portion. The accident resulted in serious injuries to the owner and his wife who succumbed to the wounds. The Muslim couple felt relieved they were not the victims of the accident. Later they saw another house in a

different locality and requested Swamiji to have a look before they purchased it. They showed him the house and after looking it up he approved of it and asked them to distribute barfi (sweets) to those present. This became their future home, a lucky and comfortable place. They reserved a room, attached bath and private kitchen for Swamiji to use whenever he chose. Swamiji made use of that facility for a few days and took my helper Roshan Lal to do the cooking for him in that kitchen.

Chapter 7: Meditating on Bhagwati

7.1 On Shraddha [See Note 9]

Speaking of this aspect of Swamiji, I would recall a few instances. One day, while travelling from Ahmedabad to Jammu, I broke journey at Delhi in order to meet Swamiji, who was staying at Delhi with the late Advocate Pandit Shamlal Wattal in his Malviyanagar house. I did not know the exact location of the house, but was given directions by someone who said he was also going to meet Swamiji and would meet me on the way. Somehow this could not be coordinated and I tried on my own. I reached the place, but was not sure of the correct entry to the house. I almost barged in by what seemed to be the rear side of the premises. I found myself entering through the back door of a room, dimly lit. I noticed Swamiji sitting in a Padmasana position (cross -legged, sitting upright), in quiet and intense contemplation. I felt very guilty at having bumped in without even knocking at the door and realised that I would have disturbed his poise. I did not know what to do. I could not retrace my steps, but felt that a sudden but effective brake had been applied to my feet and I stood immobile for five or six minutes. Swamiji's reverie broke and as I bowed to pay my respects, he asked, "When did you come? How are your children at Ahmedabad?" During the time I had been stopped in my tracks, I was thinking of what force it was that drove me to break journey at Delhi and make a detour and special effort to go round to find Swamiji. Without saying anything to me, he

opened a closet behind him, pulled out a book, turned its pages and put in front of me a paragraph entitled “Shraddha” and said, “Read this and you will know.” The book was “The Message of the Upnishads” by Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission. I read the paragraph, which explained what Shraddha really means in our religion:

“The word Shraddha has no equivalent in English. It is usually translated as faith; but it is not a faith in a creed but faith in oneself, faith in the infinite power lodged in every soul. It is also faith in the power of truth and goodness, a firm conviction of the ultimate meaningfulness of the universe. It is the totality of positive attitudes.” Please refer Note 9.

This is one instance of how Swamiji could demolish any doubts or cynicism and try to raise the ceiling of my comprehension.

7.2 Dialogues

One would find Swamiji continuously engaged in meditation. Sometimes one could feel that he used to recite some mantras or slokas silently. On such occasions, I used to get a glimpse of a living example of one of the aphorisms in Shiv Sutras — the Shaivism text.

Swamiji used to glance through newspapers, but as one savant of Kashmir, Swami Hara Kak, told me, this too was a form of his Sadhana (spiritual practice). The conversation and seeming involvement in listening to those who came to him, with their woes and troubles and who got satisfied by his incisive judgment and foreseeing advice, was a form of his Sadhana. I used to wonder how all this could be Sadhana, a form of meditation, until I came across the sutra the Shiv Sutras [refer Chittam

Mantrah, Chaitanya Atma and Katha Japah in Note 6].

7.3 Concentration

Many a time I observed that when Swamiji lit a cigarette, that was not an ordinary act — it seemed he lit a small sacrificial fire, which kept him completely engrossed. He kept his eyes closed, or if partially opened they had a faraway look of deep meditation. We observed many a time that a very familiar scent emerged from the smoke as if a stick of goggul dhoop was burning. Several times I asked my brother-in-law (Mr. Amar Nath Moza) what it was due to and wherefrom it came. Mr. Moza said that the cigarette smoking seemed to be a mode of ritual worship of Almighty Bhagwati. Incense and goggul dhoop were offered into the fire in all participatory large -scale havans. When Swamiji, apparently sitting idle, lit up his cigarette, we felt that the smoke smelt of incense. It seemed Swamiji was continuously absorbed in miniature havans offered to Bhagwati, concentrating on the anand (joy) that he felt as part of a higher state of consciousness. But he had a grip — he could bounce back and start participating in an ongoing conversation, asking questions, reacting to the audience in an appropriate manner. Please refer Note 6.

7.4 Devotional Music

Swamiji also enjoyed Lalita Sahastranaam, especially when sung by the great musician M.S. Subbulakshmi (1916 -2004). One day in Ahmedabad, he asked Sidhartha to buy the cassette and he enjoyed listening to it together with me, Sidhartha and Asha.

7.5 Visions with Bhagwati

Every person that Swamiji came into contact with found in him a

protective presence to which we ran in times of stress or despair. He embodied what the Durga Saptashati says:

Twaam Aashrita naam na vipam

Naraanaam twaam aashrita hyaa.

Shrayataam prayanti

This translates as "Those who have taken shelter with you, oh Bhagwati, themselves become a shelter for others."

During my long association with Swamiji, extending from 1949 to 1994, I observed that he never gave discourses or sermons. He had, however, a special knack of bringing home a spiritual truth. His Sadhana was based on spiritual experience and spiritual discipline rather than only on study, although he had made a deep study of all the Hindu Scriptures and was very well conversant with the theoretical part. Those who had the privilege of being near him would agree with this observation of mine. His entire life was an intense devotion to Bhagwati, in the aspect of Divine Mother.

7.6 My visit to Swamiji in 1993, which turned out to be the last

After my flight from the U.S.A, I landed at Delhi in the wee hours of December 24, 1993. I was received at IGI Airport in Delhi by my cousin Mr. M.L. Kaul, who took me to his residence at Saket. I was keen to meet Swamiji as soon as possible. Trying to get over my jet lag, I made an effort to get ready by 9.30 a.m. on the 25th. I rang up Swamiji's host in Delhi, Mr. Prithivi Nath Wattal, to enquire how Swamiji was and to ask him what time I would be able to meet him. Word came that I should come straightway. I said I would reach the house in 30 to 40 minutes. I requested Mr.

Wattal that the half platoon of his ferocious dogs should be kept in check.

I reached the place at 10:15 am and rang the doorbell. A servant put the dogs in an enclosure, opened the huge outer gate and led me to the room in Mr Wattal's house where Swamiji was staying. I bowed with my usual “Namo Narayan Maharaj.” I was unhappy to see Swamiji very weak, and the sight of his swollen arms was depressing. I asked him, “What has become of your arms — particularly the right one? It seems it must be in pain with this big blister -like swelling.” Swamiji smiled and said, “This is what happens to an aging body — don’t think too much of the blister.” He lifted his arm and the blister vanished. I thought it was a miracle and I felt slightly reassured. Then as usual, with his alert mind, he asked me about my family. I had written to him that my younger son Anil and his family were planning to visit Delhi by January 5, 1994 and that they were very keen to pay their homage. He replied, “That would be good, but tell him he should not delay beyond January 6th — it might be too late.” I could not grasp the meaning fully and asked, “Do you have any plans of traveling out of Delhi after the 6th?” He smiled and waved off the question by saying, “Oh, travel, yes, but give him the message.” And he asked his helper — a smiling, energetic boy from Nepal called Bahadur — to bring some tea. There was another helper, too, and he has asked him to cook some food for our lunch.

While tea was served, another family came over, too, and they were also offered tea. Swamiji told them that Anil would be coming and he wanted him to come not later than January 6th,

and started asking them about their relatives and how everyone was doing. Then they took leave.

For lunch, we had some lentil soup, two vegetables and rice. He always ordered some South Indian food, too. He had asked his helper to buy some masala dosas and some sambar. He started distributing the food into stainless steel plates, but I could see his hand had a slight tremor, so the movement was not smooth. But he insisted on doing this personally. This always gave him special pleasure. I was reminded of what he used to do at the end of each Yajnya — personally distributing the havan prasad like apples and bananas, walnuts and other dried fruits. One got a clear image of him as a loving generously hospitable Mother, whose devotee he was. He asked me to visit him the next day. I did so, and found no change in his condition. He called for a taxi and we went to Colonel Raina's home at Pamposh Enclave. Reaching their doorstep, he sent Bahadur to call out Colonel Raina, as he felt unequal to going inside. Colonel Raina and his wife came out to pay their regards and he had some lassi, and then went away. I took leave of him, as I had to fly to Jammu. After that I kept in touch with Colonel Raina and was told that Swamiji was weak, but carrying on.

7.7 Swamiji's final journey

On January 9, 1994, I had invited my sister for lunch at my residence in Jammu. She came at about 11 a.m. and, among other things, I told her how I found Swamiji when I visited him about two weeks earlier in Delhi and, though weak, he was as active and generously hospitable as ever. My house helper laid the table at about 1.30 p.m. and when my sister and I sat down

and were preparing to start eating, the doorbell rang. My helper told me that a messenger had come from Mr. O.N. Kaul an I.G. Police and a relation of my daughter -in -law. He was looking upset and he handed over to me a brief note to say that Swamiji had left this mortal coil and Anil, my son, whose journey to Delhi had been delayed after reaching Bombay (Mumbai) on the 5th -,was now on his way from Bombay to Delhi.

I could not eat and felt overwhelmed as I recalled my long association with Swamiji and my simple faith in his durability, although he always gave hints during 1993 that he would be preparing for his last Yajnya (havan) that year, as well as many other hints to convey that he was preparing for his last journey. I felt orphaned once again.

I conveyed the message to my friend Mr. Ram Prakash, a devoutly religious person and an IG Police in J&K. He came straightaway. He had been one of the people who had developed faith in the high spiritual status of Swamiji and had felt exalted when after two to three years of endeavours at persuasion, he was able to get Swamiji agree to stay in his house for a month or so in 1992 and 1993, before Swamiji moved to Delhi. When he saw me in a grieving mood, Ram Prakash said that this was hardly an occasion to grieve. He said that he had so much faith in a saint of Swamiji's stature that he always felt his presence. He said, "In fact, while he was physically around, we had to seek his whereabouts and then reach the place where he would be residing, but now we have just to remember him with concentration and we would be face to face with his radiant presence — beaming with peace as usual." He added that

Swamiji had chosen the same date as the highest Shankaracharya for giving up his body. Ram Prakash was very well versed in religious philosophy and rituals and astrological configuration of stars. He said this was a most auspicious day and Swamiji had the power to choose the day to give up his mortal coil. Another saint like that was the current Shankaracharya who also chose the same date for giving up his body.

Next, I tried to contact a Sadhu, Swami Poornaanand, who had been almost in constant attendance with Swamiji, for years, but I learnt he had already gone to Delhi that very day.

I flew to Delhi the same day. The cremation was over already. The rite of picking up the ashes was fixed for the next morning. By then, Anil also arrived and we attended the ritual.

Colonel Raina told us that on January 6, 1994, he received a frantic phone call from Mr. Prithvi Nath Wattal, in whose house Swamiji was staying. Mr. Wattal told Colonel Raina that Swamiji was pressing him to take him to a hospital, away from Mr. Wattal's home. Mr. Wattal said that no hospital or nursing home would take in a person who is reasonably well, and Swamiji's condition did not warrant hospitalisation. Colonel Raina then went to Mr. Wattal's home and was told by Swamiji that he did not want to die in Mr. Wattal's home, to which he was attached. As the final step in the detachment process, he wanted to die in a hospital bed. This was arranged and Swamiji attained moksha on January 8, 1994.

Meanwhile, many people associated with Swamiji whom I had been able to contact in Jammu also arrived in Delhi to pay homage. Many accompanied Mr. Wattal and Colonel Raina and

Mr. Som Nath Bhan to Haridwar.

Chapter 8. Lighter Moments

8.1 General Impressions

During the various sublime moments of contact with him what I experienced about the spiritual prowess of Swamiji, I got the feeling that he belonged to the class of saints who had achieved a higher state of consciousness. It seemed he was constantly attuned to the ever present and omnipotent Bhagwati. His spiritual stature led me to think of the various aspects of reality described by terms such as Chaitanya Atma, Katha Japah or Chittam Mantrah in the Shiv Sutras; or again Guru of unbounded compassion; or the manifestation of the Bhagwati as an innocent child. [Refer Notes 6, 5 and 8 respectively].

Once someone asked him, “Who among those that come to see you or in whose homes you agree to stay for some days or months are your disciples?”

Swamiji said, “I have no disciples — just friends. I try to invoke in them their own awareness of Bhagwati as an omnipresent and omnipotent presence and those who I feel are interested, I ask them to recite hymns and bhajans and do pooja (worship), attend the yajnyas that I organise, so that the faith of the common people is regenerated and sustained.”

Reflecting on experiences of all those who came into contact with Swamiji, one would like to recall Notes 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

One of the Sanyasins who was in continual attendance with Swamiji and who met him almost every day either in Delhi, or in

Jammu or even in Srinagar, was one Swamiji Poornaanandji. He would sit in his padmasana — the cross -legged lotus posture — directly in Swamiji's view — always in silence. And Swamiji would call upon him occasionally to do some of his small errands: "Please call so and so," or "Please fetch some tea from the market." He was a help in the preparations for the yajnyas — havans. Poornaanandji was a diabetic, his eyesight was weak; he had slight hypertension, too. Swamiji was very considerate — he would insist on his food restrictions and would not bother him with heavy jobs. But we noticed that sometimes Swamiji would speak to him with a raised voice in his mother tongue and we thought he was angry with something Poornaanandji had done or not done. Poornaanandji would respond with a smile without a hint of a frown, and then sit quietly in Swamiji's presence. I realised that he had a genuine understanding of Swamiji's spiritual stature and wanted to imbibe as much as he could.

8.2 Love for children

Swamiji had a special love for little children, whom he considered as Divine Mother incarnate. He took delight in their frisky play in his presence. I recall several occasions when he would call them to his room, give them fruits and sweets and derive particular elation from the happiness that the children felt. At the completion of his havans, he would insist on calling as large a number of children from the neighborhood as he could find and feed them lovingly with the food and the dessert of halwa and poorie, and fruits like bananas and oranges. [Please refer Note 8]

The special attention that I saw him giving my small

grandchildren, whose names he always remembered, was a pleasure for us to watch. And I noticed that he bestowed the same kind of attention to children generally. He was always interested in seeing them work hard on their studies and encouraged them to educate themselves properly, and was keen to arrange higher teachings for them. I know of many instances where, if Swamiji could mobilise some influence of important officials whom he knew, he persuaded them to help these children to secure admission in higher training institutions.

In 1982, when my daughter Malini and her husband Lokesh were in Delhi, I used to meet Swamiji, who was staying in the neighbourhood in Mr. Shyam Lal Wattal's home. Sometimes I took their two little children, Komal (6) and Gautam (3), along. Swamiji would be very happy to see them and would give them grapes or raisins or cashew barfi or cashew nuts. To me, it seemed that the small innocent children attracted him and I could see a glow of a rare kind appearing on his face. I was thus aware he was having his usual experience of looking at them as embodiments of Bhagwati's presence.

Another occasion, when my elder son, Sidhartha, and his wife, Asha, had once come to Jammu accompanied by their son, Vimarsh (5). It provided Swamiji another opportunity of this kind. He used to miss him being in our home and ask for him. On one afternoon I was asked to go and bring him over from his maternal grandparents' home. Swamiji was very happy to see him and offered him dried fruits and cashew barfi as Vimarsh enjoyed the experience.

We always witnessed the special pleasure he got when he saw

little children enthusiastically looking forward to the prasaad after purna — aahuti of the havans. He was especially keen to ensure that children have the halwa and puri after the rice and vegetables of the prasaad.

8.3 Sense of humour

Swamiji could recognise the essential characteristics, or even the irregularities of a person, by just looking at him or her. He had a good sense of humour and sometimes, when in a lighter mood he would assign an identification to such a person. One person who took about eight years to complete a four-year course was jokingly referred to as a "push model." Another person who would lose his temper a bit too often was referred to as "gussa walla" — an angry person. A third talkative person was called "bakwassi." He referred to meat as "lum lum" — Kashmiri for "pull pull."

There was one person who used to get, for some of Swamiji's havans, a big bagful of fresh vegetables from his own farm in a village adjacent to Jammu. He affectionately referred to him as "Sabzi Ram."

On one occasion, a learned person, a retired Judge of the Allahabad High Court, went to Khir Bhavani to attend the poorna ahuti — and partake of the prasaad. He started asking Swamiji, “We have read that Devi — Bhagwati — assumes the complexion of the freshly fallen snow, but here at the Tulamul temple the colour of the image is different.” Swamiji called on one of the Brahmins to answer the question, which he explained.

After the judge departed, Swamiji said, “You know he is a judge,

a man of laws and codes, but the havan is a matter of the heart, of devotional emotion." Swamiji referred to the judge as "kanoon walla" — the man of law.

Chapter 9: Reminiscences of others

9.1 Reminiscences of Mr Rattan Lal Bhandari [conveyed by his son Mr Praveen Bhandari]

9.1.1 Swamiji's place of Birth: Namakkal, Tamil Nadu

9.1.2 Revered Swamiji visited Kashmir in the year 1931, for the first time and stayed at old Shiv Mandir at Kralayar, Rainawari, Srinagar for a period of 3 months. During that period he was looked after by people who visited the temple for puja. He left Srinagar in the same year and returned in the year 1934. He stayed at the same temple again and was provided a room by the Managing Committee and was looked after by local residents of Rainawari.

9.1.3 In the years 1934 -1935 he started performing Chandi - Hawan at the same temple in Rainawari. It was learnt from our elders that Kashmiri priests did not want to take the risk of performing Chandi Havan, which requires lot of care and discipline. Swamiji warned all concerned about the rigorous guidelines for Chandi Havan. Then he persuaded and guided Bal Kak and Nanak Jattu along with some other priests to perform this havan regularly in the same temple. In the mean time Swamiji also did paran prathishtha or placement of Durga ji Murti at the same temple.

9.1.4 One day after the completion of the havan a Muslim bridegroom along with the groom's party came to the bank of the river for their journey to the bride's house by house boat.

Since the people in the groom's party were wearing shoes, they were requested to walk along the periphery of the temple compound instead of passing through the temple. But they declined the request and boarded the houseboat for their onward journey to the bride's house. To the surprise of the onlookers, the houseboat sank in shallow waters after travelling some distance. Realizing their fault, elders of the family repented for not heeding Swamiji's advice. They came to him and requested for his forgiveness. He was gracious in accepting their apology and told them that he would pray to Bhagwati for her mercy and compassion towards them; as they were saved from a potential calamity.

9.1.5 Every month Swamiji would travel on foot to Sharda Mata Temple in Muzaffarabad (now in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and would be at the temple on every Ashtami of Shukalpaksh. He would perform puja at the temple in his own way. He would undertake the journey from Rainawari to Sharda Mata temple on foot, even during winters. Before starting his monthly journey to Sharda temple a Muslim domestic servant by the name of Subhan would prepare a *pulhoor* of grass as his footwear (clog).

9.1.6 In the year 1947 he performed Sahastar (thousand) — Chandi Havan for forty days at Pokhribal Temple in the Hari Parvat area. The nature of the havan required all the priests performing puja to stay in the temple for forty days.

9.1.7 At the same time, the ruler of Jammu & Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh had organised a havan at Durga -Nag temple in Srinagar. During the course of that havan Swamiji visited Durga

— Nag temple, accompanied by some of his sevaks. On reaching the temple he immediately observed a major mistake in the rigorous discipline required for the havan. He pointed out that the direction of the havan kund was not correct and observed that the Maharaja would have to leave Kashmir. This actually happened later and after a few months the Maharaja had to leave Kashmir permanently.

9.1.8 During the invasion of Kashmir in 1947, Swamji came to our house in Rainawari and advised my father, Sh Shamboo Nath Bhandari not to leave the house. Swamiji also told my father that he should not look for him as he would not be available for a few days. Later it was learnt that Swamiji was staying in the house of Sh Trilokinath Mattoo, district judge at Shopain.

<u>As narrated By Late Omkar Nath Labru</u>

It was Labru's Sahib's birthday and Swamiji had gone to his residence at Bal Garden, Srinagar, for a night's stay. Labru Sahib went to the market to purchase cigarettes for Swamiji " Will's Brand". It so happened that particular brand of cigarettes was not available in Bal Garden market and he went over to the market a little further in Karan Nagar. While crossing the road, he saw Sajda ji coming out of her car. She was not well and had come to Karan Nagar to get her ECG and X -Ray done by Dr. Mohanlal. Labru Sahib complained to her that, she whom he considered as his sister had forgotten his birthday and she promised that she would come to Labru Sahib, if her tests finished earlier.

Sajda Ji came to Labru Sahib's home. As she was proceeding

towards Labru Sahib's room, she saw Swami ji in the front room. Sajida ji told Labru Sahib that he is a nice brother, he knows that she is not well and he has Sadhu ji at home and he has not told her. On this Labru Sahib told her that Swami -ji is not a kind of person, he would have sought Swamiji's prior approval before he can take her to meet him.

Swamiji told Labru Sahib to ask Sajda ji to visit him in Rainawari. She came to the Bhandari residence to meet Swamiji. After taking tea, Swamiji told her that on the coming Sunday there is a havan at Khir Bhawani and if she could arrange to send flowers" Red Dahlia" at 5 am to Khir Bhawani. She sent the flowers through her son at 5 am and on seeing the flowers Swamiji said "Time par pahunch gaya, Phool acha hai". [The flowers came in time and they are good]. These flowers were used in the havan. A few days after the havan Sajdaji again visited the Bhandari residence in Rainawari. Swamiji told her that he feels that there is nothing wrong with her health and sometimes machines malfunction and give wrong results. He advised her to visit Delhi again and when she got her tests done again, to her surprise all the tests indicated that there was nothing wrong with her health. She was sure that this was purely due to Swamiji's blessing that test results had changed completely.

9.2 Reminiscences of Dr. Hira Lal Razdan

Next I reproduce the impressions recorded in a letter to me by my late wife Parma's sister, Kanta, and her husband, Dr. H. Razdan, a very senior scientist now retired.

9.2.1 "We feel happy to know that you are presently collecting

material to pen down the Life of Swamiji in Kashmir. Recently, the “Koshur Samachar” of Delhi had recounted briefly the lives of various Kashmir saints starting from Lal Ded [Refer Note 10] to Rishi Pir, Lass Mot, Grata Mot, Nand Lai ji, etc. That moment, I felt that Swamiji too should have been listed, as he was as much a Kashmiri saint, having spent all his formative years there. It is gratifying to know that you plan to do that job now. I always thought of Swamiji as a gentle soul who was our well -wisher. Kanta recalls one particular instance in her childhood in Srinagar, Kashmir around 1952 or 1953, when she, along with Rupa, Nirmal and Suman, were sleeping in a room adjoining Swamiji’s room at Magarmal Bagh house. She woke in the middle of the night to go to the attached bathroom. After coming out, she suddenly realized that there was “burning” light from Swamiji’s room, which was visible from the attached common verandah. She came out to the verandah and saw Swamiji in a Samadhi and a bright light emanating from his body. She awakened her brother Tathasahib and Bhabi and told them that she thought there was fire in Swamiji’s room. They also came out to see it but did not see any such “fire.” They only pacified her by saying that Swamiji has given her a real “darshan” (appearance).

9.2.2 We are reminded of another instance related to Swamiji. Somewhere around February 1981 or 1982, a lump was discovered in Kanta’s breast and a date was fixed for its removal in SMHS Hospital in Srinagar. Suddenly, we got a message (probably through a telephone call from Colonel Raina in Delhi) that Swamiji had come to Srinagar. We went to see him immediately at Mr. Labru’s in Bal Garden. It was quite cold and

Swamiji was wrapped up in Feran and blankets. Kanta told him about the operation, which was to be performed two days later. Swamiji didn't first reply, but went on smoking and thinking quietly for the next half an hour. After that, he told us not to worry and go ahead with the operation and that he should be informed about her welfare after the operation. After the operation we called Mr. Labru's, requesting them to inform Swamiji that the operation was successful and that the lump sample was to be sent to Delhi for a biopsy. Swamiji informed us that he was the next day going back to Delhi and that he would carry the sample for the biopsy. The next day, before his departure, we handed over the sample to him and Sanjay later had it tested at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Later on, we pondered why Swamiji had come to Srinagar just for four days in winter when it was so cold. In fact it snowed quite heavily one day after the operation, when we took Kanta back home. We could only surmise that he had come only because of Kanta's health problem and operation and went back immediately with the biopsy sample. Needless to mention that we had not until then informed anybody about the lump or the operation, including Colonel Raina. Only I, Kanta and Seema knew about it.

Colonel Raina was especially very much impressed when Swamiji was himself operated on for prostrate problems without anaesthesia.

9.2.3 On September 19, 1985, the day Seema was to be married and we were to receive the Barat at our temporary "camp" near Khan market in Delhi in the open lawn, it suddenly became cloudy around 2 -3 p.m. and we had a few drops of rain too. We

became quite panicky and Kanta even fainted. Swamiji was there with us around lunchtime and he had decided suddenly to leave for Pamposh Enclave (when we were expecting him to stay on until the Barat arrived in the evening). Colonel Raina had that afternoon gone to Pamposh to change his clothes. On his return, he informed us that it had rained very heavily in Pamposh and even waterlogged the area, and he was indeed worried as to how the Barat could be received in the open at Khan Market camp. But on his way back, he noticed that it had not rained at all beyond a certain point en route and the whole function went on very well. It was only later that everyone realized that Swamiji had taken the clouds with him from Khan Market to Pamposh and saved the function.

Seema's "lagan" incident has been corrected a bit by Kanta, as follows. It seems that Swamiji came that afternoon to Khan Market camp, distributed some prasaad and told Colonel Raina to join him quickly and proceed to Pamposh. They left by car immediately and it seems that en route from Moolchand Bridge onwards, it rained very heavily — so much so that, by the time they reached Pamposh, they could not even enter the house there, as the road was full of rainwater. Colonel Raina was very worried about the marriage function, which was to be held in the open an hour or so later. However, when he returned (without Swamiji) to Khan Market a little later, he was pleasantly surprised to find that it had not rained there. Everyone surmised later on that Swamiji had taken the rain away from Khan Market camp towards Pamposh and saved the reception function.

9.2.4 One of the finest moments with Swamiji was one wintry

afternoon in Srinagar when we (Kanta and I) visited Swamiji at Bhandhari's in Rainawari. We had that morning gone to my sister's place (Shri. S.N. Bhat), and on the way back, we just dropped in at Bhandhari's. Swamiji was there all alone and as usual was happy to see us. No one came there that afternoon and we had all the time with him (about four hours). He opened up with us that day and talked about so many things, including a little bit about his past. We too talked about many things, but I don't remember anything of what we talked about. However, I remember distinctly that we neither asked for any favours nor asked about his views on any matter concerning us. There was a peculiar general warmth and closeness flowing between us that day. Tea was served to us by Bhandhari around 4.30 p.m., which we were all drinking silently when suddenly, in an impulsive manner, Swamiji started pouring tea from his cup into mine. I equally impulsively stopped him from doing so and he quietly withdrew. I have ever since regretted my action, for I realized later that impulse of his had a lot of meaning and probably would have meant a lot to me. I am ever since living with that mistake.

9.2.5 Raju (Rajendra, son of Dr. & Kanta Razdan) had a special affinity for Swamiji and vice -versa. When Raju was in his final year of a B.E. program at Pilani, he asked Swamiji (in my presence) to please help him find a job. Swamiji told him in his characteristic smiling way that he should study further — why worry about the job yet? Raju, of course, soon enough joined a small company called Katonics in Delhi and used to meet Swamiji

regularly in Delhi. It was Sanjay's marriage time and a few days before marriage, everyone had collected at C -42 Pamposh Enclave in the evening, including Kanta and Vijay. Swamiji suddenly missed Raju and enquired about him. Kanta told him that he had just gone to Bangalore for one year of training. Swamiji looked puzzled and said, "But he has to go foreign. Why did he not talk to me before joining? Vijay, you call him tomorrow and ask him to return immediately." Kanta told Vijay Raina later not to call Raju as he would be confused, but Vijay insisted that he must call Raju as he was afraid of not obeying Swamiji. The next morning, Vijay tried his best to contact Raju in Bangalore, but nobody seemed to know him (probably because he was one of the trainees who had just joined). However, by about 4 or 5 p.m. that day, when they finally tracked him down, he had just then left for Trichy for a tour, so Vijay could not talk to him. I came a day later to attend the marriage and was told all about it. I was equally happy that the message did not reach Raju, but I received a telegram from Raju saying, "Swamiji is right. I have just received a message from Edmonton University, Canada stating that I have been given admission in a M.E. program with an assistantship and that I should immediately proceed to the Canadian Embassy for a visa. I am doing just that." For obtaining the visa, he had a little difficulty later on, as the Canadian Embassy wanted him to get a no -objection certificate from his previous employer (BHEL), as he had mentioned it in the visa form. But BHEL refused to issue such a certificate, as he was committed to five years of guaranteed service with BHEL. Raju of course once again approached Swamiji

in Delhi with this problem. Swamiji in his characteristic way admonished him smilingly for going to Bangalore without asking him. But then he quietly assured him that all would be well soon. Raju later on paid BHEL Rs 950 to get out of the contract and was soon enough issued the no -objection certificate, as well as a visa by the Canadian Embassy. The rest is history.

9.2.6 One day in the early nineties, I was on my way back to Srinagar after attending a 15 -day conference in Adelaide, Australia, when I received a message at Delhi airport from Kanta not to proceed to Srinagar as the situation was very bad. I cancelled my onward journey and over the next few days was quite a bit confused as to what I should do, as there were a number of messages in Delhi from my Atomic Energy Department that I must immediately proceed to Srinagar, as the laboratory I was heading was facing considerable difficulties. My daughter Seema and I were reminded of Swamiji and we immediately met him at Mr. Wattal's in Delhi. He very lightheartedly and casually said that there was nothing to worry about and that I could go to Srinagar, but I must come back early. Seema and I were relieved and happy and I booked my ticket to Srinagar the next morning. However, a little while later that day, we pondered over Swamiji's statement and wondered why did we not ask him the reason for an early return. We realized that he had so casually said it that we did not take it seriously at that time. (This was very characteristic of Swamiji — to pronounce the most significant things in a very casual manner). Fifteen days later, terrorism was at its height in Srinagar and Shri Lassa Kaul, Station Director at Doordarshan, Srinagar, was shot dead. I (Dr.

Razdan) had received a threatening letter warning me of helping in the production of bombs. We were nervous and terror - stricken, and at the same time torn by my responsibility towards my job. Kanta quietly and firmly reminded me of Swamiji's words and that it was time to heed him. The situation was so bad that the next morning, I ran away from Srinagar all alone; Kanta followed me a few days later. Later on, the terrorists had remarked in anger that I had given them the slip. When we met Swamiji again in Delhi that month, he just remarked that Kashmir was once and for all "gone," as far as Kashmiri Pandits were concerned.

9.3 Reminiscences of Mrs Rupa Dhar

English translation of a letter written to me (P.N. Bakaya) by Mrs. Rupa Dhar, younger sister of my late wife, Parma.

9.3.1 " You have asked me to recollect some of my experiences of respected Swamiji. It is a very difficult task. Howsoever much one writes about him, it will always fall short. Swamiji did not give an impression of being a miracle -man. He would not say that so and so will surely happen or not happen. He would only say that such and such thing could happen and always ask us to pray sincerely for Bhagwati's Grace and blessing. He would attract everyone to respect him. He would consider us as innocent children and treat us with kindness and forgiveness. He would always give us his blessings. Swamiji had an amazing ability to read people's minds.

9.3.2 I know many people who had personal experiences of this, but I like to relate my own. I recall that one day I was at the Bakayas' place while preparations were in full swing for Anil's

marriage. My elder sister, Behenji (Parma), was very busy meeting and looking after the guests and so also were other relatives, as well as our younger sister Kanta (Kanta Razdan's and her husband's reflections on Swamiji are already recorded above). Swamiji was sitting in his quiet posture on a bed. I asked him if he needed anything. He asked me to get him a glass of lassi (curds with water). I went downstairs and prepared some lassi with a little salt and zeera, and brought up the jug and a tumbler. When I reached Swamiji's room, I saw four or five guests paying their respects to him. He asked me to offer lassi to all of them. I went downstairs and brought more tumblers. By the time I entered the room, four more faces had arrived. Swamiji would not accept the lassi for himself but wanted me to give it first to all the guests in the room. I had to go downstairs again and bring up more lassi and more tumblers. But again I fell short of the lassi and the tumblers and I had to make another trip — this had to be repeated ten times. While going up the stairs for the eleventh time, I began to have a feeling of slight annoyance at the fact that while Swamiji had asked me to give him a glass of lassi, he did not accept even one, but I had to climb up and down for other people. When I reached him for the eleventh time, I was greeted with a smile and he said, "Well, Rupa, you have done well to comply, though it was hard for you to tire yourself. Now give me one glass to drink and take the rest." I felt he had read my feelings and I silently asked for forgiveness.

9.3.3 I recall the incident of what seemed a real miracle on the occasion of my sister Kanta's daughter's wedding. The Barat –

groom's party — had to be received in an open lawn where the seating arrangements and the tables had been laid in style, and everyone in the family, including the youngsters, boys and girls, had been allotted their duties. The groom's party was expected in half an hour and we saw a whole cluster of dark clouds crowding overhead just towards the wedding reception venue. We felt very disturbed and thought of Swamiji as we had faith he would be able to do something to avert the totally disastrous result of a thunderous rain flooding the place and disrupting all seating and eating arrangements as well as the venue of the Vedi — the place decorated for the ritual of wedding. Lo and behold, Swamiji arrived in a taxi and called me, "Rupa, do you have some sweets in the house, bring a packet." I ran and got one. Meanwhile he called, "Chotay' ko lao" (Bring Chotay), which was the name by which he used to call Behenji's (Parma's) granddaughter, six -year -old Sonal Bakaya. He asked her to open her mouth and, accompanied by what we felt was the quiet muttering of a recitation, put one piece of barfi and one laddu in her mouth in quick succession, and asked me (Rupa) to distribute the rest among other small girls and boys. (Please see Note 8).

He called my elder brother Colonel Raina and asked him to accompany him to his residence at Pamposh Enclave, about two kilometres away. He asked the driver to drive as fast as he could. When they reached Pamposh Enclave, they saw the whole area flooded with a continuing shower of torrential rain. He asked Colonel Raina to dress up and go back to the wedding venue. Colonel Raina reached the place quickly and saw the threatening cluster of dark clouds were moving towards Pamposh Enclave, as

if some miracle had diverted them (Mrs. Kanta and Dr. Razdan have also recorded this incident).

9.3.4 I also recall our visit to see Swamiji at Colonel Raina's place. My husband (Mr. Pranji Dhar) and I told Swamiji that we were in search of a suitable match for our daughter, Anita. Swamiji saw the sense of anxiety in our tone, and he lit a cigarette. With his usual faraway look, he said, "Yes, you should find a good match in 1983 and perform that wedding in 1984. Prepare accordingly." We left and started planning. A few days after that, we got a proposal from a family that everyone said was good and well - respected and the boy was also reported to be suitable. We wrote to my husband's elder brother. He wrote back to say that he had enquired and received good reports. After a few days, Swamiji visited Colonel Raina's place and he was told about the proposal that Rupa and Pranji were seriously considering. He lit a cigarette and, after a little reflection, asked Colonel Raina to convey to me that this proposal should not be pursued. Colonel Raina told Swamiji that he had already written to her to say yes, but Swamiji insisted that he should write another letter or send a telegram to cancel that and advise Rupa to look for some other match. I was surprised to see two contradictory letters from Colonel Raina. Then we got another proposal. The match was finally settled in 1983 after Swamiji predicted that the couple would be happy; the wedding was performed in 1984.

9.3.5 Meanwhile, after the engagement in 1983, I ran to Swamiji again to say that time was short and I was feeling apprehensive about the preparations, as I didn't yet have money enough for all the shopping and the preparations to be able to perform the

marriage in 1984. Swamiji pulled out a packed of 50 notes of Rs. 2 each and asked me to start off. I utilised one 2 -rupee note as a supplement to pay off for every shopping item. It seemed that it was only by the end of my shopping for the wedding that Swamiji's gift of Rs. 100 was exhausted.

9.3.6 Once when Behenji (Parma) was lying critically ill (in December 1979) in the Kidney Institute at Ahmedabad, the doctor was considering her for hemodialysis. My elder brother, his wife, myself and my younger sister, as well as Sidhartha, Anil and Mr. P.N. Bakaya, were present. Suddenly, Swamiji appeared, accompanied by a Sadhu from a local ashram. He saw Behenji, who told him she was in great pain and wanted Mukti — Liberation — as life was becoming intolerable. Here I would recall that a few months earlier, while Behenji was under treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, we had asked Swamiji, “Behenji is not well at all — when will she recover?” He said, “ In December.”

Behenji herself wasn’t sure of her cure, and she called both of us sisters, whom she had looked after lovingly and with care as her own daughters, and started advising, “You have to think of the world without me — I am not going to last. Nobody ever has, particularly after both kidneys fail to function. Bakaya Saheb is fighting a losing battle, spending money recklessly to save me, but it is all to no avail. How can one convince him it is all a waste of effort and money?"

In the Ahmedabad hospital, Behenji folded her hands with reverence and devotion and pleaded repeatedly to Swamiji, “Please perform a miracle and free me of the rotten frame of my

body, which is an intolerable bundle of pain." Swamiji put his hand on her forehead and muttered something, with a trickle of tears running down from his eyes — and took her leave. Colonel Raina's wife asked the accompanying Sanyasi to give Behenji something to relieve her pain. He said, "Tell me on next Friday" — that was eight days ahead. Behenji felt better facing her torment, after Swamiji had touched her forehead before leaving the hospital suddenly. Early in the morning on Friday, she passed away and in her last repose she looked relaxed — as if she had attained Mukti.

9.3.7 Once our second son Atul got a job offer from Dubai and we were undecided whether we should agree. Our elder son had joined the Merchant Navy after long training at sea, and used to be out most of the time. My husband and I felt it would be very hard for us if we have neither of our two sons near us, but at the same time we did not want to be selfish and stand in the way of their better prospects outside India. On such occasions of facing a dilemma, we always turned to Swamiji for advice. Without any argument, he said, "Why should every one of our youngsters think of going outside India. After all, who will be here for your old age? You require the moral support of a near one, too. Dubai will not be good for Atul. Bhagwati will listen to his and your prayers and keep him happy here, too." So Atul is here, right in Faridabad, with us and handling a responsible, senior level job in a large company.

9.3.8 I asked Swamiji about my husband's health and financial situation after his retirement from work after a long, honest period of service. He said Bhagwati had blessed him with good

health and a capacity to do good religious work. He now feels happy keeping himself busy with one project or another, helping community causes, such as the construction of a temple complex, including an 80 -room hostel, a hall, a library and a medical centre.

9.3.9 I would now like to remind you of a very recent incident. After Swamiji left his mortal body in January 1994, all of us felt orphaned. We always took him for granted as a very durable saintly protective umbrella for us who had developed faith in him and his spiritual powers from Bhagwati. In that state of mind, I asked you (Mr. P.N. Bakaya), “What shall we do to approach him when he is no more visible to us?” You told me that he had such power that you only have to think of him and meditate on him as part of Bhagwati’s Shakti — Energy — and you will feel you are face to face with him in the form you knew him.

9.3.10 When in January 1999 my younger daughter -in -law Renuka was expecting her second child, I felt strongly distracted and worried about a problem that nobody else could understand or sympathise with. The delivery date predicted by the gynaecologist looking after Renuka was, according to our almanac, inauspicious and we had been told that those born under the shadow of that kind of star had to be exiled at birth for at least two years. When I thought of such a prospect, I was at my wits’ end and pleaded with my husband and my son to persuade the doctor somehow to alter that date. I felt restless when both of them laughed this away and tried to convince me to shake off this ancient superstition. A few days before that

date I felt more and more restless, and I could neither sleep nor rest, nor eat properly. One evening, two days before the date, I felt exhausted and fell into a deep slumber. I had a dream and felt I was going to approach Swamiji, whom I had been intensely thinking of as my last refuge. In my dream saw him in a clean, nice room, sitting in his usual cross -legged posture, smoking a cigarette with a faraway look. He looked resplendent in his saffron robe and healthy and young — as we had seen him in the 1970's. He beckoned me to sit down. After a while, when I was just thinking of my problem and seeking, silently, a way out of it, he told me, "Now you can go — the Sun will get hotter and you have a long way to go." I pleaded, "I want to stay a little longer, please. He agreed, but later on he said, "Now it is really getting late — don't bother, pray to Bhagwati, who will remove all obstacles, but while leaving, have a darshan of the saint in the room near the exit door before going home." In the dream I felt better and looked to the room Swamiji had asked me to see, where I saw a woman saint whose face had a glow of a comforting aura. She gave me a prasaad — a few almonds, some sugar cubes and raisins. She raised her hand in a gesture of blessing. I woke up, comforted and free of all fear and anxiety. Renuka's delivery came exactly a day after the position of the bad star had improved.

9.4 Significance of Swamiji

One of my grandchildren Gautam, son of my daughter Malini, who has some recollection of Swamiji, asked me to write down reflections of my association with him. In fact, this has been a

demand from all my grandchildren, who had developed a respect for Swamiji. Gautam wanted me to describe the significance of Swamiji. My son Anil has tried to answer this question, while in my reflections the purport of Swamiji's significance also comes through.

I recall that whenever Anil had some problem, Swamiji would listen carefully and probe it and assure a solution, which sounded quite sensible and was also loaded with his special ashirwad (blessings), and it worked.

Anil always looked upon Swamiji as a caring and loving grandfather whom he held in tremendous esteem. Swamiji would smoke a cigarette, and with a faraway look, seemingly delve into the future, as if through a spiritually propelled telescope. Anil developed faith in him and would go to meet him with a sincere and devout mind. Sometimes Anil would ask him questions about his life and experience, and Swamiji would willingly open up.

I would here like to record the impressions that have been penned down by Anil for this essay, in particular the answer to the question often raised by my grandchildren: namely, what was the significance of Swamiji's presence in our lives?

This is what Anil has recorded:

9.4.1 Love: My exposure to Swamiji extended over most of the first 43 years of my life. To me, he was a kind grandfather who filled an emotional void. When I was born, only one of my four grandparents was living and that was my paternal grandfather, who died before I turned 14.

Swamiji represented and practiced some manifestations of Bhagwati, like universal love, mercy and compassion, like the Divine Mother. He did not speak ill of others nor would he encourage this trait in those who came in contact with him. He would comfort us and give us valuable advice whenever the need arose.

The respect he got from people of all castes and religions brought out the oneness of mankind.

9.4.2 Motherly Hospitality: He was an extremely generous host who would offer us many things to eat whenever we would visit him. On such occasions, he would treat any person in the room with equal respect and hospitality, whether it was a minister, a driver or a poor person; he insisted on feeding everyone around before he would start eating. Despite his enormous power as a yogi or sanyasi, he maintained a low-key profile, showing utmost humility to all concerned. This demonstrated the importance of selflessness and the need for getting rid of the ego.

Swamiji's act of giving reminded me of Note 12.

9.4.3 Godly traits of sacrifice, service and suffering: He did not have wealth, yet he was revered for the sacrifice and the austere penance he went through. I still remember how he would roll his sparsely clothed body for kilometres on rugged terrain around the Hari Parvat with his clasped hands pointing to the temple. Again, his expeditions to the Sharda temple wearing just a lungi (a kind of a dhoti or loincloth without any top), even during the intensely cold winter months, speak volumes of the faith he had in Bhagwati. He taught us the importance of sacrifice and I have now come to the conclusion that one cannot achieve success in

anything without sacrifice, service and suffering.

He consumed very little for himself. Of the food offered to him, he would eat a very small portion of it and before starting to eat it, he would distribute the rest to everyone present. This symbolised the importance of caring, charity and compassion.

9.4.4 Gifts: In my childhood, I vividly remember Swamiji visiting our house in the early morning on my birthdays with a few gifts, including a pen and a one-rupee note or coin. Although these gifts were inexpensive, I used to treasure them for the blessings that seemed to radiate from them. I would often use the pen in my important exams and pass with flying colours. This kept my faith alive.

I still cherish a few items Swamiji gave me. One was a new English edition of the Bhavani Sahastharanaam. Another was a copy of the Hanuman Chalisa. Since the time he gave me a copy in 1984, I have read the Hanuman Chalisa almost every Tuesday. Remarkably, Swamiji asked me to read the Hanuman Chalisa when I visited him in 1984 in a room where he was temporarily residing within the Rehari temple in Jammu. Twenty-five years later in 2009, when I visited the same temple, I was pleasantly surprised to see the verses of the Hanuman Chalisa painted on the outside wall of the same room inside the temple. The Hanuman Chalisa verses had been painted after 1984; Swamiji must have seen the future of that room.

9.4.5 Detachment: He had achieved a state of detachment, which is very hard to achieve for us ordinary human beings. The fact that he had left home and hearth, including a young daughter, when he was probably in his thirties reminds one of a

similar detachment shown by Gautama Buddha and thousands of yogis in the last 5,000 years.

9.4.6 Accurate Predictions: Swamiji was always there for us in times of need. He was exceptionally wise and had a tremendous sixth sense, for which we had tremendous respect. He was able to predict incidents about our lives with considerable accuracy. He was remarkably accurate in predicting marriage partners and approximate marriage dates or years. This is true of my own personal experience as well as that of my sister (Malini Bazaz), aunts (Rupa Dhar and Kanta Razdan), some cousins, my wife's brother, and several other relatives and friends.

9.4.7 Spiritual Cleansing Process: When I was 33, I became a devotee of Shri Sathya Sai Baba through a series of unusual events, including miracles. The fact that Swamiji had his baptism into yogic life at Shirdi had a special meaning for me, because Sathya Sai Baba was a reincarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba. To me, life represents a journey of spiritual cleansing, the objective being to lift, permanently and irrevocably, the self to the divine level. Swamiji was a guide who made it possible for us to have a comfortable journey.

At the very least, one's words, thoughts and actions must never stoop to the rakshasa level or the animal level. Ravana and the Kauravas had fallen to the rakshasa level through unbridled lust and greed. Likewise, anger, jealousy and hatred were the evils and obstructions that every individual has to avoid in day -to - day life.

I am reminded of the ancient Hindu saying "Matra Deivo Bhava, Pitra Daivo Bhava, Acharya Daivo Bhava," meaning "Mother is

God, Father is God, Preceptor (or Guru) is God." Swamiji as a Guru encouraged strong family values and his independent opinion on these matters was always respected. Every human being goes through hundreds of lives with hundreds of different parents, spouses, children, etc., but the important thing is always to try and accumulate positive karma. The karma points are predominantly given by God, who resides within those you owe a debt, starting with your parents. Every person is born alone and dies alone, and so all he can hang onto is his karma points.

I would say that just as email and the internet are a dimension different from ordinary hard copy post or mail, likewise the spiritual dimension is different from the visible physical dimension. You need the spiritual dimension most when after a tiring day, you need a good sleep or when under high pressure, you need to make decisions with a cool mind under conditions of equanimity. It is only through the spiritual cleansing process and through acts of love, sacrifice, service and truth that one can get much needed peace.

The spiritual cleansing process was successfully undertaken by Swamiji amongst various people who came into contact with him.

Whenever I would meet him, I would greet him "Jai Narayan Maharaj". I always looked forward to the opportunity of touching his feet. This gave me a sense of satisfaction and contentment, though he never encouraged or relished this.

9.4.8 Mahatma

He made us aware of an otherwise latent or unknown dimension

to life that we miss in ordinary day -to -day existence. To me, Swamiji was a **Mahatma (a great soul)** who showed the path for the atma (or individual soul) to move a few steps closer to the Paramatma (or Supreme Soul, meaning God or Bhagwati). Spending time in his presence was time well spent for nurturing the spirit in uplifting company. Life is a journey. Swamiji was a guide who made it possible for us to have a comfortable journey.

Faith is a dimension that is hard to comprehend and develop. He introduced us to the great power of Bhagwati. He would always urge us to have faith that Bhagwati would look after us.

The havans we attended created deeply devotional vibrations we all cherished and there were times when the soul would experience unity with that greater being or Bhagwati. Swamiji's life was a life of Namasmarana (chanting of Bhagwati's name), of self -purification and sacrifice, and of service to all who came into contact with him.

In everyday life, the body tends to be driven by the senses. Proximity to Swamiji made us realise that the atma is and should be superior to the mind, which in turn should control the body.

If we were looking for an ideal or benchmark, I would compare a yogi-bhaktha relationship with that of Swami Ramakrishna as yogi and Swami Vivekananda as bhaktha (or devotee). In his own way, Swamiji was similar to a Ramakrishna looking for bhakthas like Vivekananda.

Lastly, the verse in Note 7.2 embodies Swamiji.

Note 1 Sharda

Kashmir was a great seat of learning in ancient times and was called Sharda Peeth. Aadi Shankara, during his visit to Kashmir is said to have earned here the honour of Jagadguru, according to legend. Sharda grants the boon of emancipation through wisdom.

Aurel Stein in his notes on 'Rajtarangini' says that " the ancient Sharda Tirtha (shrine) is evidently the most important in Kashmir, and famous far beyond its limits." Kalhana,author of Rajtarangini, has left us some distinct indications about its position, in the upper Kishanganga valley. Sahib Ram "Tirth Sangraha" mentions the shrine too. A legend connects Rishi Sandilya with it. He is said to have felt the presence of goddess Sharada in a dream who gave him the location of the place where she would appear for him.

ALBERUNI speaks of Sharada Shrine, not in his description of Kashmir, but in his account of the most famous Hindu temples: the Sun God at Multan, the Vishnu Charakreswami of Thaneshwar, and the Linga at Somnath, Bilhan (second half of eleventh century) mentions the Sharada Shrine.

The Jain Scholar, Hem Chandra (1088 -1172) of Gujarat mentioned it in his Prabharakacharita — for this he had asked King Jayasinga to secure for him eight old grammars which could be found complete only in the Temple library of Saraswati in Kashmir (Sharda).

Jonaraja mentioned that King Zain -ul -Abidin (r.1423 -1474) of Kashmir also paid a visit to the shrine.

Sharda

The Goddess of the Divine Lute (*veena*)

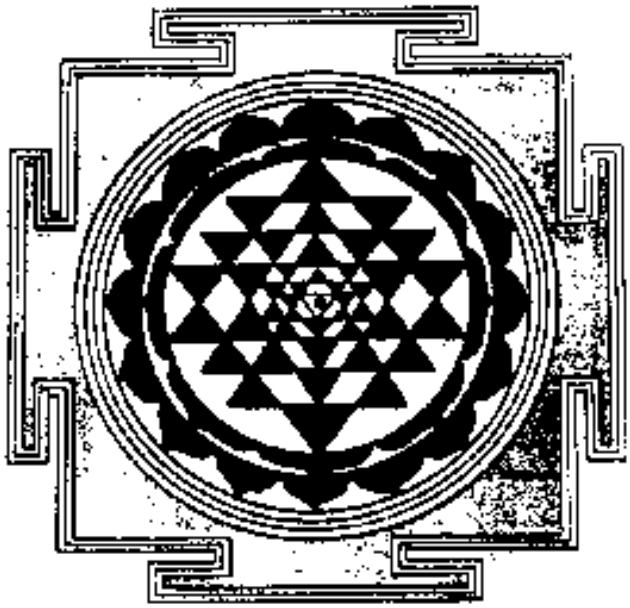
In this aspect she represents original knowledge transcending all limitations. *Sharda* is an epithet of *saraswati*, the goddess of learning. She grants boons. Her effulgence is the means of obtaining final emancipation.

Medga is the presiding *sakti* of Kashmir (D.C. Sircar in *Sakti Pitha*) which was a great seat of learning in ancient times called *Sharda Pitha*. *Adi Sankara*, during his visit to Kashmir, is said to have earned here the honour of *Jagadguru* (world teacher). The place (now in Pakistan -occupied Kashmir) is still know as *Sharda* and the relics at the shrine have been popular and universally respected (A History of Kashmir by P.N.K. Bamzai p. 199) [Thanks for research note by Sidhartha and Asha]

Note 2
Page 14

The Meaning of Shri Chakra [Hari Parvat, Sharika temple, Chakrishwar]

The Mother exists here in the form of a diagram. She is within its orbit. Even the triangles that shape the corners of the Shri Chakra are the forms of Devi. All these 43 triangles and lotuses vibrate from the very basic central point that represents the core of the whole cosmos. It has 3 circles around it and 4 gates to enter into it. It originates from one central point.



Note 3

Footnote on Havan or Yajnya -

One could quote from a discourse given by Sathya Sai Baba;

“The lesson to be learnt from the performance of Yajnyas is that sacrifice is the greatest means to realise the Divine.”

“Do not bargain with the Lord — Some people have a selfish motive even in making offering to the deity. Something small is offered in expectation of a big return.”

“We recite the Shanti mantra: “Om sahanavavathu; Sahanav bhunakchtu; Sahaviryam karavavahi Om Shanti, Om Shanti, Om Shanti.”

“Let us move together in unison; let us live in harmony, in communion with each other. Let peace reign all over. Lokah Samasthah Sukhino bhavantu. Let all be happy”.

Note 4 Texts and hymns Swamiji used in havans

[Durga Sapta Shatee]

Mantra from Durga Sapta Shatee Publishers Govind Bhavan, Gita Press, Gorakhpur

Durga Sapta Shatee is a popularly respected text of Hindu Dharma. Among stories of Bhagwati's grace it embodies some deep secrets of sadhana — spiritual practice. Swamiji considered it as a treasure of cash.

4.1

Daihi Saubhyagam Aarogyam

Daihi May Paramam Sukham

Roopam Daihi Jayam Daihi Yasho Daihi Dvisho Jaihi

Give me Roop: Recognition of reality of my atma

Give me Jayam: Victory over illusion and acquisition of real knowledge

Give me Yasho: Fame

Give me Dvisho Jaihi: Ability to triumph over enemies and anger

Note 4.2 Indrakshi Stotram

"...Goddess of Numerous Vital Energies" Translated & Annotated By Janki Nath Kaul 'Kamal', Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Srinagar - Kashmir

"...We have been told that in Kashmir the Indraksi Stotram is popular amongst the devout and used as the Sidda mantra. In South India also it is very popular amongst the faithful..." Foreword by S. Sankaranarayanan

Note 4.3 Bhavani Sahastranaam

"It is not just a prayer book. It is a manual of Sadhana...a guide to the Everest of truth consciousness.."

from Foreword by Mr M.P. Pandit

"The thousand names of Divine Mother, is another sacred book of Hindus written in praise of Shakti. In this book, Nandikeshwara, the favourite among the 'Ganas of Lord Shiva' enquire from his master Lord Shiva, the secret behind His (Lord Shiva's) meditation. Since Lord Shiva is the Master of this whole Universe and Cosmos, why does He (Lord Shiva) meditate and on whom. Lord Shiva replies that He is incomplete without 'Shakti' and this 'Shakti' resides in Him as Cosmic Energy and it is in this form that He evokes Her during His meditation. The dialogue continues and Lord Shiva reveals and recites the thousand names of Divine Mother as a blessing to Nandikeshwara."

http://www.koausa.org/Patrika/peetham.html

'Bhawani Sahastranaam' is very popular among Kashmiri Pandits and they recite it almost daily.

Moti Lal Khar http://ikashmir.net/mlkhar/4.html

"There are inspired litanies that literally speak of her thousand facets. For hundreds of years they have been cherished in living links with the Divinity. Among the chief ones in the Bhavani - nama -sahasra -stutih, which is as sacred and popular in Kashmir as the Lalithasahasthranaam in the South of India."

Foreword by K M Pandit, preface by Pandit Raghunath Kokiloo

Note 5

Panchastavi Chapter 4, sloka 31

Vidyam param katicidambaramamba kecit
anandameva katicitkaticitcca mayam;
tvam viisvamahurapare vayamamanama
saksadaparakarunam gurumurtimeva.

Some say that the Divine Power is just Pure higher knowledge,
Some say It is space or universal consciousness, O, Almighty Mother;
Some say it is Bliss, some say it is illusion,
But for us, the devotees, we see it face to face as a
Guru Image of unbounded compassion. .....Explanatory meaning by Janki Nath Kaul (Kamal)
published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Shivalaya, Karan Nagar, Srinagar

Note 6

Shiv Sutras [discovered by Vasu Gupta in Mahadev Mountain Srinagar]

Vasugupta (860–925) discovered the famous Shiv Sutras inscribed on a rock in the Mahadev mountain in Srinagar. He was a native of Kashmir and was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. As per legend Lord Shiva came to him in a dream and asked him to touch the rock so that it will overturn and reveal the Shiv Sutras to him. He was asked to copy them out speedily after which the rock would return to its position. Three Shiv Sutras are quoted below [the explanations of these are provided in the following three books]:

Chittam Mantrah

"By intensive awareness of one's identity with the Higher Reality in a mantra (a formula consisting of a word or set of words addressed to the Deity) and thus becoming identical with that Reality the mind itself becomes the mantra!

Chaitanya Atma

Shiva Sutras notes translated by Jaidev Singh (p. 82)

Katha Japah

"The dialogues of the yogi become his acts of meditation."

Shiv Sutras by Balji Nath Pandit

Glossary in Introduction to Kashmir Shaivism: Swami Muktanand

Note 7

Note 7.1 Sri Aurobindo (The Foundations of Indian Culture, p 124) — "these kinds of superior beings encouraged a framework of personal and social discipline and conduct, of mental and moral discipline by which one could, each in his or her limits, become eventually ready for the "greatest existence". Such saints "have the power to impose on us a belief in a higher consciousness".

Note 7.2

He who understands the pain of others is one of God's own.
Helping others in sorrow does not reduce his humility.

This person respects all people in the world, and does not condemn or criticize anyone.
He is pure in speech, deed and thought. His mother is blessed indeed!

He is equanimous and has given up all desires. To him, other women are [equivalent to] mothers.
He never speaks the untruth, not even if his tongue is tired. He does not covet others' wealth.

Delusion and attachment do not affect him, his mind is firm in detachment.
He is ever engrossed in God's name and meditation, and he embodies all places of pilgrimage.

Such a person has no greed and deceit. He has overcome lust and anger.
Narsi says: Such a person is worthy of worship, and alone elevates his entire race

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaishnava_jana_to

Note 8

Kumari Rupa Sansthana Naranayee Namastote

Oh, Devi, we bow to you in reverence as you manifest yourself as an innocent little child.

Note 9

Shraddha

Message of the Upanishads by Swami Ranganathanand (Ramakrishna Mission) Page 44

Note 10 Durga Sapta Shatee

Tvam Aashritaam Na Vipannaraaaam

Twam Aashritaam Hyaa Shriyataam Prayanti

Chapter 4, Sloka 29

Note 11

Shiv chuy thali thali rozaan

Mav zaan Hyound ta Mussalmaan

Trukhay chukh ta pananuy paan parzaan

Ada chay Saahibas zanni zaan

Siva abides in all that is, everywhere;

Then do not discriminate between

a Hindu or a Mussalman.

If thou art wise, know thyself;

That is true knowledge of the Lord.

Lal Ded Lalleshwari (1320–1392)

Note 12

Shraddhaya deyam, ashraddhaya adeyam.

Hriya deyam, bhiya deyam,

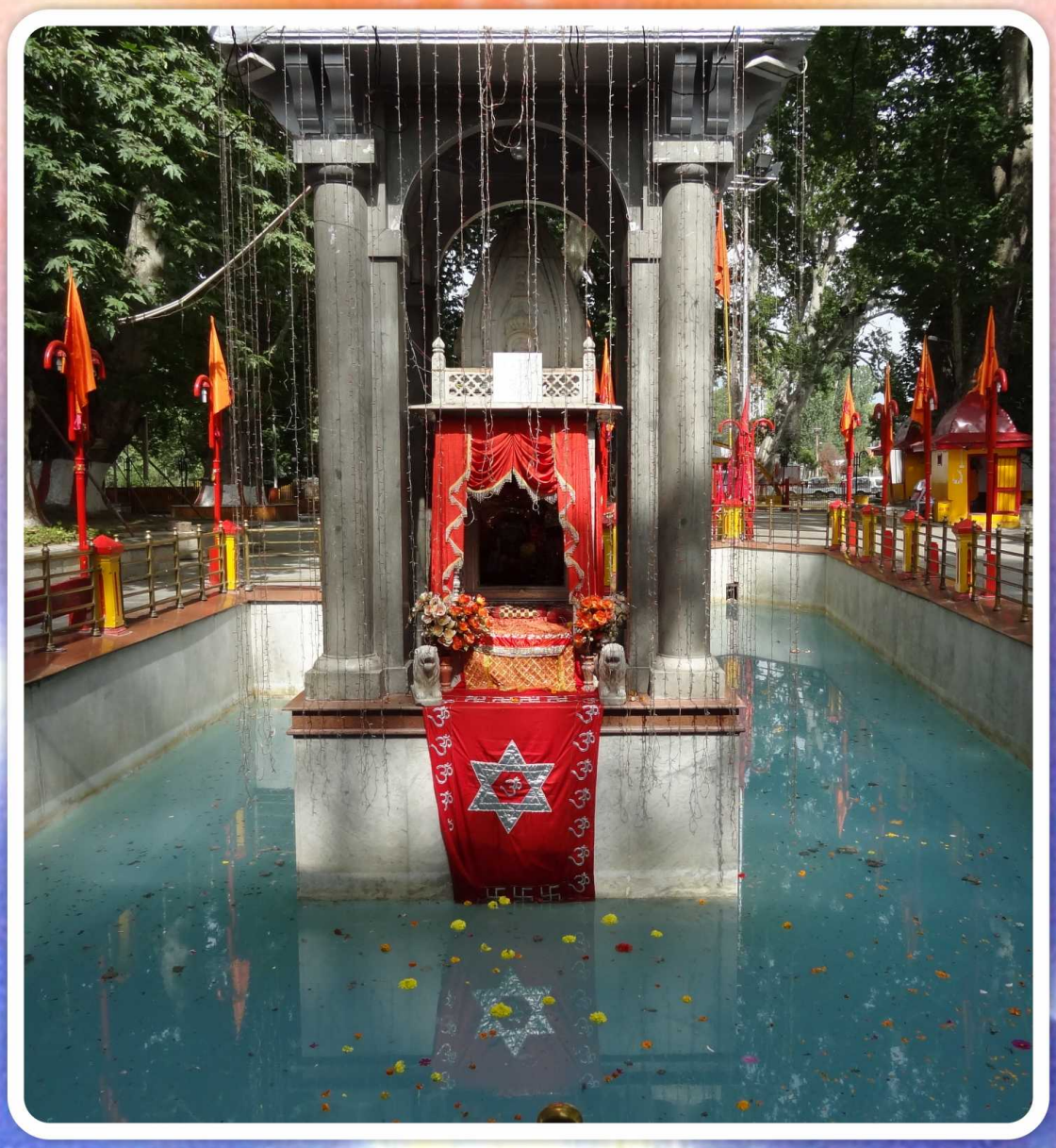
sriya deyam, samvida deyam.

Give with reverence; do not give disrespectfully.

Give with humility, give with a sense of awe,

give generously, give affectionately

Upanishads



Khir Bhavani